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The Novgorod icon of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom

ÁGNES KRIZA



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*The Novgorod Icon of Sophia,
the Divine Wisdom*

ÁGNES KRIZA

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
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First Edition published in 2022

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022930616

ISBN 978-0-19-885430-2

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198854302.001.0001

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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Foreword

The four main parts (WORD, IMAGE, IDENTITY, and HISTORY) of this volume are supplemented with an Appendix, which constitutes an organic part of the book. The Appendix contains a Critical edition of the Sophia commentary with an English translation, as well as a Catalogue of the fifteenth-sixteenth-century Sophia images. Apart from bibliographical and other factual references, this Catalogue provides a short iconographic description of the images. Based on the available information, the Catalogue also presents an iconographic classification of the early Sophia images and a survey of the development of the Novgorod Wisdom iconography. In order to avoid repeated descriptions of and bibliographical references to Sophia images, I refer to this Catalogue and its items (as 'Cat. number') throughout the book.

Translations are my own unless indicated otherwise. Biblical quotations are from the English translation of the *Orthodox Study Bible*, in which the Old Testament is a translation made from the Septuagint and the New Testament is that of the *New King James Version*. Accordingly, the numbering of Old Testament biblical (including psalm) verses follows the Septuagint.

I use the simplified Library of Congress system of transliterating Russian Cyrillic into the Latin alphabet, as well as the BukyVede Old Church Slavonic Cyrillic font with the kind permission of Sebastian Kempgen.

This volume is an updated and extended version of my doctoral dissertation defended in 2017 at the University of Cambridge.

Acknowledgements

This book could not have been completed without the support that I have received from a number of people. First of all, I want to extend my gratitude to my supervisor at the University of Cambridge, Richard Marks for his scholarly guidance, patience, support, and for showing perpetual confidence in this research. I am likewise grateful to the reviewers of my dissertation, Antony Eastmond and Rowan Williams, as well as the anonymous reviewers of this book. For their advice and the helpful consultations, I am indebted to Donal Cooper, Michael S. Flier, Simon Franklin, Anna Jouravel, Nazar Kozak, Victoria Legkikh, Alexei Lidov, Basil Lourié, István Perczel, Tatiana Popova, Aleksandr Preobrazhensky, Ludmila Shchennikova, Jonathan Shepard, Engelina Smirnova, Oleksiy Tolochko, Tatiana Tsarevskaya, and Konstantin Vershinin. My endeavour to obtain images for this book and the permissions to publish them was generously supported by Aleksey Alekseev, Andrey Borodikhin, Nazar Kozak, Alexei Lidov, Gáspár Parlaji, Aleksandr Preobrazhensky, Alexei Rastorguev, Irina Shalina, Anna Zakharova, and Vera Zavaritskaya. For their help with the acquisition of the copies of manuscripts, I am grateful to Andrey Borodikhin and Olga Grinchenko. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Richard Marks, Alexandre Denizé, and Luke Saville for their assistance in language editing. The greatest thanks, though, must go to my husband, Péter Tóth, who motivated and helped this research in every possible way.

The publication of this volume was supported by the Society of Historians of Eastern European, Eurasian and Russian Art and Architecture.

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List of Abbreviations

- Andr. Cret., *Serm. Laz.* Andrew of Crete: *Sermon on Lazarus Saturday*—BHG 2218, CPG 8177
- ANF *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325*, 10 vols, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Buffalo—New York, 1885–96.
- BHG *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, 3 vols, ed. F. Halkin, Bruxelles, 1957; *Auctarium Bibliothecae hagiographicae graecae*. Bruxelles, 1969; *Novum auctarium Bibliothecae hagiographicae graecae*, Bruxelles, 1984.
- BLDR Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi, 20 vols, St Petersburg, 1997–.
- CCL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, Turnhout, 1953–.
- ChOIDR Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh
- Chrys., *De virg.* John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*—CPG 4313
- Chud. Chudovskoe sobranie = Collection of the Chudov Monastery, GIM, Moscow
- CPG *Clavis patrum graecorum*, 3 vols, ed. M. Geerard, Brepols: Turnhout, 1983 (№ 1000–1924); 1974 (№ 2000–5197); 1979 (№ 5200–8228); *Supplementum*, ed. M. Geerard and J. Noret, Brepols: Turnhout, 1998.
- DChAE *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaeologikes Hetaireias*
- Ephr. Syr., *Serm. Ios.* Ephrem the Syrian: *Sermon on the Beauteous Joseph*—CPG 3938
- GIM Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, Moskva = State Historical Museum, Moscow
- GPNTB SO RAN Gosudarstvennaia publichnaia nauchno-tekhnicheskaia biblioteka Sibirskogo otdeleniia Rossiiskoi akademii nauk, Novosibirsk = State Public Scientific and Technical Library of Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk
- GRM Gosudarstvennyi Russkii muzei, Sankt-Peterburg = State Russian Museum, St Petersburg
- GTG Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereia, Moskva = State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
- Ios. Vol., *Enlight.* Iosif Volotskii, *Enlightener*
- IRI *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva*, 13 vols, ed. I. E. Grabar', V. N. Lazarev, and V. S. Kemenov, Moscow, 1953–1964.
- KB Sobranie Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyria = Collection of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, RNB, St Petersburg
- LCI *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, 8 vols, ed. E. Kirschbaum and W. Braunfels, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1968–1976.
- Lit. Comm.* *Liturgical Commentary (Tolkovaia sluzhba)*
- Mazur. Sobranie F. F. Mazurina (f. 196) = Collection of F. F. Mazurin, RGADA, Moscow

- MDA Sobranie Moskovskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii = Collection of Moscow Theological Academy, RGB, Moscow
- Meth. Patara, *De Lepra* Methodius of Patara: *On the leprosy*
- MMK Muzei Moskovskogo Kremlia, Gosudarstvennyi istoriko-kul'turnyi muzei-zapovednik 'Moskovskii Kreml'" = Moscow Kremlin Museums, The Moscow Kremlin State Historical and Cultural Museum and Heritage Site
- NB MGU Nauchnaia biblioteka Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta imeni M.V. Lomonosova, Moskva = Lomonosov Scientific Library of the Moscow State University, Moscow
- NGM Novgorodskii gosudarstvennyi ob"edinennyi muzei-zapovednik = Novgorod State United Museum-Reserve
- NPNF-1 *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series I, 14 vols, ed. Ph. Schaff, New York—Edinburgh, 1887–92.
- NPNF-2 *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series II, 14 vols, ed. Ph. Schaff and H. Wace, New York—Edinburgh, 1890–1900.
- ODB *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, New York—Oxford, 1991.
- OLDP Sobranie Obshchestva liubitelei drevnei pis'mennosti = Collection of the Society of Lovers of Ancient Literature, RNB, St Petersburg
- PE *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia*, Moscow, 2000–.
- PG Migne, J.-P., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*, Paris, 1857–1866.
- PL Migne, J.-P., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, Paris, 1844–1855.
- PSRL *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, 1841–.
- RBK *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, ed. K. Wessel, M. Restle, and B. Borkopp, Stuttgart, 1966–.
- RGADA Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov, Moskva = Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, Moscow
- RGB Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, Moskva = Russian State Library, Moscow
- RIB Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia Arkheograficheskoiu komissieiu, 40 vols, St Petersburg—Petrograd—Leningrad, 1872–1927.
- RNB Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, Sankt-Peterburg = National Library of Russia, St Petersburg
- Rum. Sobranie N. P. Rumiantseva = Collection of N. P. Rumiantsev, RGB, Moscow
- Sc. Par. John Climacus: *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*—CPG 7852
- SKKDR *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei rusi*, 3 vols, Leningrad—St Petersburg, 1987–2004.
- Sofia 2000 Lifshits, L. I., ed. *Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia: Vystavka russkoi ikonopisi XIII–XIX vekov iz sobranii muzeev Rossii*. Moscow: Radunitsa, 2000.

Sof.	Sofiiskoe sobranie = Collection of the library of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, RNB, St Petersburg
Sol.	Solovetskoe sobranie = Collection of the Solovki Monastery, RNB, St Petersburg
<i>Sophia</i> 1999	Azzaro, G. C. and Azzaro, P., eds., <i>Sophia: la sapienza di Dio</i> . Milano: Electa, 1999.
SPbII RAN	Nauchno-istoricheskogo arkhiv Sankt-Peterburgskogo instituta istorii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk = The Scientific and Historical Archive of the St Petersburg Institute for History of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Tikh.	Sobranie M. N. Tikhomirova = Collection of M. N. Tikhomirov, GPNTB SO RAN, Novosibirsk
TODRL	<i>Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury</i>
TSL	Sobranie Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry = Collection of the Holy Trinity-St Sergii Lavra, RGB, Moscow
TsMiAR	Tsentral'nyi muzei drevnerusskoi kul'tury i iskusstva imeni Andreia Rubleva, Moskva = Central Andrei Rublev Museum of Ancient Russian Culture and Art, Moscow
VGMZ	Vologodskii gosudarstvennyi istoriko-arkhitekturnyi i khudozhestvennyi muzei-zapovednik, Vologda = Vologda State Museum-Preserve of History, Architecture and Decorative Arts, Vologda
VMCh	Velikiia Minei Chetii, sobrannye vserossiiskim mitropolitom Makariem, 16 vols, St Petersburg–Moscow: Arkheograficheskaia komissiia, 1868–1917.

Just as the pious, orthodox and grand prince Vladimir had himself received baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Cherson, and having come to Kyiv, commanded all to be baptised, and then the entire Rus land was baptised. And in the beginning, from Constantinople a metropolitan was sent to Kyiv, and bishop Ioakim was sent to Great Novgorod. And grand prince Vladimir ordered that a church of stone be built in Novgorod, Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God, according to the Constantinople custom and the icon of Sophia, the Wisdom of God was then painted, after a Greek prototype.

Priest Silvestr, during the Viskovatyi Affair, 1554¹

¹ O. M. Bodianskii, 'Moskovskie sobory na eretikov XVI veka, v tsarstvovanie Ivana Vasil'evicha Groznogo', *ChOIDR*, no. 1 (1847): 20. For the original text see Cat. 3.

Introduction

The Novgorod Sophia Icon and the Viskovatyi Affair

The year 1547 was a turning point in Russian history. That year Moscow Grand Prince Ivan IV (1533–47) was crowned by Metropolitan Makarii (1542–65) in the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral as the first tsar of Russia (1547–84). That same year can also be considered as a watershed moment in the history of Russian art. The coronation of the tsar was followed by a devastating fire which seriously damaged the cathedrals of the Moscow Kremlin and their icons. After this fire, one of the most influential clerics of the Kremlin, Silvestr († ca. 1566), the priest of the Annunciation Cathedral, the personal church of the tsar, commissioned a series of new icons. Both Metropolitan Makarii and Silvestr moved from Novgorod to Moscow, a city located on the western border of today Russia, where Makarii served as Archbishop between 1526 and 1542. Unsurprisingly, Silvestr appointed painters from Novgorod and neighbouring Pskov for the work. The new icons were distinguished by their unparalleled complex and dense innovative iconographies which exercised a lasting influence on the subsequent development of Russian painting. Since Moscow had its own traditions in painting, these new icons, which demonstrated a novel approach to the visual and created a new relationship between text and image, provoked protests from the Muscovites. The opposition of Ivan Viskovatyi, Tsar Ivan IV's learned diplomat to these icons, led to a council in 1554, now known as the Viskovatyi Affair, which discussed the problem of allegory in icon-painting.¹

Ivan attacked the incomprehensibility of these icons and also criticized their different allegorical representations of God, especially those which represented Christ with angelic wings. In his letter opposing the new icons, Viskovatyi argued that the symbolic images of God 'diminish the glory of the representation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh', referring to the Christological tenets established by the defenders of icons during the Byzantine Iconoclasm (726–843). However, in 1554, Metropolitan Makarii defended these images and Priest Silvester related the circumstances of the commissioning of the icons and provided a list of the

¹ For the Viskovatyi Affair with further bibliography: Á. Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 79 (2016): 79–130.

controversial iconographies.² Although both Makarii and Silvestr cited their ancient origin, the majority of these iconographies were innovations that appeared for the first time in Rus. In fact, there was only one icon on this list which had a well-established iconography: the icon of *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, the local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (Cat. 3; Fig. 0.1).

Indeed, the icon was not as old as Silvestr claimed: it was not Vladimir the Great, the grand prince of Kyiv (980–1015), who constructed the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (Fig. 0.2) but his grandson, Vladimir, prince of Novgorod (1036–52). Vladimir was the son of grand prince Iaroslav the Wise (1019–54), to whom the construction of the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral can be linked. It is also very unlikely that the Wisdom icon was painted after a Greek prototype in the eleventh century.³ The *Novgorod Sophia* icon was mentioned for the first time in the early sixteenth-century Novgorod chronicles.⁴ In 1510, Vasili III, the Moscow grand prince ordered that a candle in front of this miraculous icon in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral be burned in perpetuity ‘according to the ancient custom’.⁵ The earliest dated example of the iconography has been preserved in the freshly explored fresco of the Novgorod Archbishopal Palace dating back to 1441 (Cat. 2; Figs 0.3, 11.4). The other oldest Sophia images, including the icon of the Sophia Cathedral, are also from the fifteenth century, but do not have certain dating (see the Catalogue in the Appendix). Nonetheless, it is likely that the Novgorodian iconography remained unknown in Moscow until the mid-sixteenth century and thus provided an opportunity for Silvestr to maintain the early origin of the disputed icons by referring to the ‘ancient’ Sophia icon.

The Sophia icon easily justifies the accusation of its incomprehensibility. The image shows an enthroned, winged, and crowned beardless figure, the Wisdom of God, in regal vestments with a burning red face, seated between the standing figures of the Theotokos with Emmanuel in her hands and John the Baptist, holding a scroll. Her throne is held by seven pillars and her feet are on a circular

² Silvestr commissioned five icons from Novgorod icon-painters (*Trinity with acts; Credo; ‘Praise the Lord from the Heavens’; Sophia, the Wisdom of God; ‘It is truly right’*) and four ‘large icons’ from Pskov (*Last Judgement with vision of Daniel; The Renewal of Christ Our God’s Temple of Resurrection; Passions of the Lord with Gospel parables* and the famous *Four-part icon* which is still visible in the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral). Bodianskii, ‘Moskovskie sobory’, 18–21. For the *Four-part icon* with bibliography: Kriza, ‘The Russian Gnadenstuhl’. A fuller list was also provided by Makarii: O. M. Bodianskii, ‘Rozyisk ili spisok o bogokhul’nykh strokakh i o sumnenii sviatykh chestnykh ikon diaka Ivana Mikhailova syna Viskovatogo v leto 7062’, *ChOIDR*, no. 2 (1858): 36–7. For the list and analysis of the icons commissioned after 1547 see V. D. Sarab’ianov, ‘Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony Blagoveshchenskogo sobora i ikh vliianie na iskusstvo XVI veka’, in *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia: Materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. L. A. Shchennikova (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoriko-kul’turnyi muzei-zapovednik ‘Moskovskii Kreml’, 1999), 164–217.

³ The early dating and the Greek origin of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon were challenged by Lebedintsev in 1884 for the first time: F. T. Lebedintsev, ‘Sofia, Premudrost’ Bozhiiia v ikonografii severa i iuga Russii’, *Kievskaiia starina*, no. 10 (1884): 557–9.

⁴ For the other sources, referring to the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, see Chapter 11.

⁵ PSRL, vol. IV/1/3 1929, 537. Cf. Cat. 3.



Fig. 0.1. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon, second half of the fifteenth century. St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod.

footstool. Over Sophia's head is the bust of the blessing Christ. Above this composition is a segment of heaven with the prepared throne flanked by angels.⁶

The meaning of this icon was apparently unclear to contemporaries as is attested by the surviving commentary. The earliest known copies are in

⁶ For a more detailed description of the iconography see the Catalogue in the Appendix.



Fig. 0.2. St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, 1045–1050.

Photo: author.

fifteenth-century manuscripts, but this text also appears in some Sophia representations, most importantly in the icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (Cat. 3, Fig. 0.1).⁷ It, however, does not help the comprehension of this iconography: the commentary is just as obscure as the icon itself. The meaning of the winged Sophia, as well as the dating and localization of the first appearance of the iconography, has remained a great art-historical conundrum.

The Novgorod Sophia Icon and the Sophiological Controversy

This opacity of the Wisdom icon has led to diverse interpretations. During the nineteenth century, when the iconography appeared in scholarly publications for the first time, researchers who tried to decipher the meaning of the icon primarily highlighted its Christological symbolism: Wisdom is Christ, in accordance with the biblical (1 Corinthians 1:24; Proverbs 9:1–5) and common patristic

⁷ T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant novgorodskoi ikonografii Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei i obstoiatel'stva ego poiavleniia', *Zograf*, no. 43 (2019): 166. Further inscriptions of the commentary are in Cat. 12, 22.



Fig. 0.3. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, fresco in the Cell of Archbishop John, Archiepiscopal Palace, Novgorod, 1441.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

interpretation of Sophia.⁸ In 1884, the Ukrainian scholar, Feofan Lebedintsev connected the angelic image of Sophia with the Angel of the Great Counsel, from the Book of Isaiah (9:5, according to the Septuagint), which is a prophecy about Christ's redemptory incarnation pre-eternally decided by the Holy Trinity.⁹ Nevertheless, why Christ was depicted again, above the head of 'Angel-Christ', and the meaning of the three-figured *Deesis* composition of the icon with flanking Theotokos and John the Baptist remained unclear.

A Marian interpretation of Sophia was also proposed for three reasons. Firstly, because the seventeenth-century Wisdom icon of the Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv represents the Mother of God in the centre. Secondly, because the dedication feast of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral was the Dormition of the Mother of God from

⁸ Metropolitan Evgenii (Bolkhovitinov), *Opisanie Kievosofiiskago sobora i kievskoi ierarkhii* (Kyiv: Tip. Kievopecherskoi lavry, 1825), 16–17; P. Solov'ev, *Opisanie Novgorodskago Sofiiskago Sobora* (St. Petersburg, 1858), 50–7; F. I. Buslaev, 'Dlia istorii russkoi zhivopisi XVI veka', in *Istoricheskie ocherki russkoi narodnoi slovesnosti i iskusstva*, vol. II (St. Petersburg, 1861), 294–8; Archbishop Ignatii (Semenov), 'Ob ikone sv. Sofii v novgorodskom Sofiiskom sobore', *Zapiski Imperatorskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* 11 (1865): 244–69; Lebedintsev, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhiiia v ikonografii severa i iuga Rossii'.

⁹ Lebedintsev, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhiiia v ikonografii severa i iuga Rossii', 567. See also N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografiia Gospoda Boga i Spasa nashego Iisusa Khrista* (St. Petersburg: Tov. R. Golike i A. Vil'borg, 1905), 74; N. V. Pokrovskii, *Tserkovno-arkheologicheskii muzei S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, St. Petersburg: 1879–1909 (St. Petersburg, 1909), 135.

the late fifteenth century, the time of Archbishop Gennadii (1484–1504).¹⁰ Finally, the main argument deployed to justify a Marian explanation of Wisdom was the commentary itself which, in various redactions, names Sophia ‘the Church of God, Sophia, the most pure Mother of God, that is the virginal soul’. Fedor Buslaev suggested that the meaning of the icon underwent a transformation over time: Sophia-Christ, with the aid of monastic idea of virginity attributed to Sophia in the commentary, was gradually perceived as the image of the Virgin Mother of God.¹¹ In 1876, however, Filimonov, who argued that the Marian interpretation of Sophia appeared under Western influence, put forward another possible explanation of the icon: the winged Sophia originally referred not to a concrete person, but was the personification of the abstract concept of Wisdom.¹²

A quarter of a century later, a similar idea was expounded by the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) in his lecture (1898) on the French positivist philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798–1857).¹³ Solovyov linked his teaching about Sophia as the Divine Humanity with Comte’s Religion of Humanity and the recently accepted Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin (1854). For Solovyov, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, a matter of Russian ‘religious creative work’, was a manifestation of this Sophiology:

Who does this main, central, and royal person depict, so clearly distinct from Christ, from the Mother of God, and from the angels? The image is called Sophia the Wisdom of God . . . Neither God, nor the eternal Word of God, nor an angel, nor a holy man, the Great, royal, and feminine Being accepts veneration from both the one who completed the Old Testament and from the foremother of the New Testament. Who could it be other than the truest, purest, and most complete humanity, the highest and all-encompassing form and living soul of

¹⁰ Evgenii (Bolkhovitinov), *Opisanie Kievosofiiskago sobora*; Buslaev, ‘Dlia istorii russkoi zhivopisi XVI veka’, 296–8; G. D. Filimonov, ‘Ocherki russkoi khristianskoi ikonografii: Sofii, Premudrost’ Bozhiia’, *Vestnik Obshchestva liubitelei drevnerusskogo iskusstva*, no. 1–3 (1874): 9–13. See also P. A. Golubtsov, *Sobornye chinovniki i osobennosti sluzhby po nim* (Moscow: Izd. Imp. o-va istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Mosk. un-te, 1907), 30–1. Example of the *Kyiv Sophia* iconography: *Sophia* 1999, 188–9; *Sofia* 2000, 156–7.

¹¹ Buslaev, ‘Dlia istorii russkoi zhivopisi XVI veka’, 298. This idea was developed further by Lifshits who suggested that ecclesiology created the link between the Christological and Marian interpretations of the icon during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: L. I. Lifshits, ‘Sofii, Premudrost’ Bozhiia v Russkoi Ikonopisi’, in *Sofia* 2000, 16.

¹² Filimonov, ‘Ocherki’, 1874, 7, 9. For the Western origin of the Marian interpretation of Sophia: Filimonov, 13. This was challenged by Pokrovskii, *Tserkovno-arkheologicheskii muzei*, 134.

¹³ For the impact of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon on Solovyov’s Sophiology (with further bibliography on Solovyov): J. D. Kornblatt, ed., *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 53–60; J. D. Kornblatt, ‘Visions of Icons and Reading Rooms in the Poetry and Prose of Vladimir Solov’ev’, in *Aesthetics as a Religious Factor in Eastern and Western Christianity*, ed. W. P. Bercken and J. Sutton (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 125–43.

nature and the universe, eternally united, and in the process of time uniting with the Divine, and uniting to Him all that is?¹⁴

Solovyov's Sophiology had a wide-reaching impact on Russian theology and fundamentally determined the subsequent historiography of the Sophia icon. In 1914, Pavel Florensky (1882–1938), a theologian polymath and martyr of the Soviet terror, devoted a chapter of the published version of his theological dissertation, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: an Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, to Sophia (*Letter Ten*), where he aimed to reconcile Solovyov's philosophy with the doctrines of the Orthodox Church. This theological discourse was accompanied by an art-historical study of the Sophia icon and an analysis of its commentary. Based on this commentary, Florensky proposed that there might have been more interpretative layers of the icon and he was the first scholar to point out its ecclesiological symbolism: 'For some scholars, Sophia is the Word of God or even the Holy Trinity. For others, she is the Mother of God. For still others, she is the personification of Her Virginity. For others still, she is the Church. For yet others, she is mankind in its totality, the Grand Être of Auguste Comte... [the old-Russian commentaries] give a subtle synthesis of the different aspects of Sophia.'¹⁵

Florensky's attempt, however, to reconcile Solovyov's ideas and ecclesiastical dogmas did not prove successful as the subsequent history of Sophiology showed. After the Russian revolution, the greatest promoter of Sophiology was Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), a follower of Solovyov and friend of Florensky, who was exiled from the Soviet Russia and settled in Paris where the so-called Russian Religious Renaissance reached its fullest flowering at this time.¹⁶ Here, in this inspirational intellectual environment, he developed his sophiological theology in a series of publications. In common with Solovyov, he linked Wisdom with Mary, by calling her a 'personal manifestation of Sophia' and Sophia's 'created image'.¹⁷ Bulgakov's ideas, however, were met with the growing opposition from the Orthodox *émigré* theologians. In 1935, Bulgakov together with his teaching about Sophia the Eternal Feminine, was condemned as heretical by the Patriarchate of Moscow.

¹⁴ Translation by B. Jakim. V. Solovyov, 'The Idea of Humanity in Comte', in *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*, ed. J. D. Kornblatt, trans. B. Jakim (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 225.

¹⁵ Translation by B. Jakim. Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 278.

¹⁶ For Bulgakov's relation to the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography: N. A. Vaganova, *Sofiologiia proto-ierieia Sergeieia Bulgakova* (Moscow: Izd-vo PSTGU, 2010), 114–51. For an introduction into Bulgakov's Sophiology in English: R. Williams, *Towards a Russian Political Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 1–21.

¹⁷ J. Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 401.

The main argument used by Bulgakov's opponents was the Christological interpretation of Sophia, not only widely discussed in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art-historical and historical studies on the Sophia icon and churches dedicated to the Sophia, but already advanced in an anonymous sixteenth-century treatise which questioned the Marian explanation of Wisdom.¹⁸ Whilst Vladimir Lossky (1903–58) attacked Bulgakov's teaching directly, another remarkable theologian and patristic scholar, George Florovsky (1893–1979) expressed his criticism implicitly.¹⁹ The latter's premise was that modern Sophiology abandoned the tradition of Orthodox Church Fathers. This abandonment was a logical consequence of Western influence in contemporary Orthodox theology which he termed the Western *pseudomorphosis* of theology whose origins went back to the sixteenth century. Florovsky's programme of a 'return to the Church Fathers' constituted the basis of his ground-breaking studies in patristics.

Significantly, Florovsky saw a correlation between the *pseudomorphosis* of theology and the transformation of icon-painting which, for him, began with the Sophia icon.²⁰ He addressed this problem in his influential paper *On the veneration of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom in Byzantium and in Russia* published in 1932, the main conclusions of which appeared in his major monograph *The Ways of Russian Theology* (1937).²¹ Much like Pavel Florensky, Florovsky conducted in-depth art-historical research into the iconography of Sophia, the creation of which he linked with the activities of Archbishop Gennadii. Florovsky compared the 'apotheosis of virginity' in the Sophia commentary with German mysticism and the Sophia iconography with the images of Wisdom in the printed editions of the fourteenth-century German mystic Heinrich Suso's *Exemplar* (1482, 1512): on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon 'the traditional image of the Angel of the Great Council appeared in the new light' of Western mysticism.²² Just as Solovyov created an indirect link between the Sophia iconography and the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, so too did

¹⁸ A. I. Nikol'skii, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhia: Novgorodskaia redaktsiia ikony i sluzhba sv. Sofii', *Vestnik arkheologii i istorii, izd. Imp. arkheologicheskim institutom* 17 (1906): 92–100; G. D. Filimonov, 'Materialy', *Vestnik Obshchestva liubitelei drevnerusskogo iskusstva*, no. 1–3 (1874): 1–4. See Chapter 12.

¹⁹ P. L. Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); A. Klimoff, 'Georges Florovsky and the Sophiological Controversy', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 1–2 (2005): 67–100; P. Hunt, 'The Novgorod Sophia Icon and "The Problem of Old Russian Culture": Between Orthodoxy and Sophiology', *Symposion: A Journal of Russian Thought*, no. 4–5 (2000): 4–8.

²⁰ Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky*, 233–42; Hunt, 'The Novgorod Sophia Icon', 8–16.

²¹ G. V. Florovskii, 'O pochitanii Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei v Vizantii i na Rusi', in *Trudy V s'ezda Russkikh akademicheskikh organizatsii za granitsej v Sofii 14–21 sentjabria 1930 goda*, vol. I (Sofia, 1932), 485–500; G. Florovskii, *Puti russkago bogoslovija* (Paris, 1937). English translation: G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, trans. R. L. Nichols, vol. I, *Collected Works*, V (Belmont, Mass: Nordland, 1979).

²² Florovskii, 'O pochitanii Sofii'. The formula 'apotheosis of virginity' comes from Filimonov, 'Ocherki', 1874, 9.

Florovsky, but this link had a sharp polemical message in his narrative. For Florovsky, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, with its alleged Western elements and ‘decorative symbolism, or more precisely, allegorism’, constituted ‘the break with hieratic realism’ and signalled the decline of medieval Russian icon-painting.²³

Florovsky discussed the Viskovatyi affair in the context of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. From this perspective, the dispute between Metropolitan Makarii and Viskovatyi reflected the debate between the Sophiologists and their opponents. Viskovatyi’s protest was a ‘return to the Fathers’. Based on quotations from patristic texts written during the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm (726–843), Viskovatyi argued that the new allegorical images of God in the Kremlin undermined the significance of Christ’s incarnation—and this was the opponents’ main claim against Sophiology. Florovsky’s inference clearly indicates this: ‘Viskovatyi did not defend the past, he defended ‘truth’ that is, iconographic realism. His quarrel with Metropolitan Makarii was a clash of two religious and aesthetic orientations: traditional hieratic realism as opposed to a symbolism nourished by a heightened religious imagination.’²⁴

This critique of ‘the new trend’ of Russian icon-painting exercised a profound impact on scholarship of medieval Russian art. In his seminal book, *Theology of the Icon in Orthodox Church*, the icon-painter Leonid Ouspensky (1902–87), a friend of Vladimir Lossky, described the history of Russian icon-painting following the Florovskian scheme of *pseudomorphosis* of theology.²⁵ Unsurprisingly, Florovsky’s aforementioned words from his *Sophia* study appear as verbal quotations in Ouspensky’s discussion of the Viskovatyi Affair which is the focal point of his book.²⁶ Nevertheless, whilst Florovsky’s ‘neopatristic synthesis’ stimulated fruitful patristic studies and Ouspensky’s icon theology inspired contemporary icon-painting, the stigmatization of allegorical trends of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Russian painting as *quasi* heretical virtually paralyzed scholarship in this field. Furthermore, Ouspensky’s book was not published in Russian until 1989 (the French version of the *Theology of the Icon* appeared in 1980). Up to this point, in the Soviet period research on these complex iconographies had taken a back-seat: the *Novgorod Sophia* icon itself was rarely mentioned in art-historical monographs.²⁷

²³ Translation by R. L. Nichols. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, I:29.

²⁴ Translation by R. L. Nichols. Florovsky, I:30.

²⁵ L. A. Uspenskii, *Bogoslovie ikony pravoslavnoi tserkvi* (Paris: Izd-vo Zapadno-evropeiskogo Ekzarkhata, Moskovskii patriarkhat, 1989). Its first French edition: L. Ouspensky, *La théologie de l’icône dans l’Eglise orthodoxe*, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1980). English translation: L. Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 2 vols (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992). Cf. Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky*, 241.

²⁶ Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 2:313–17.

²⁷ In the Soviet period, except for Iakovleva’s article (A. I. Iakovleva, “‘Obraz mira’ v ikone ‘Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhia’”, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Problemy i atributsii*, ed. O. I. Podobedova and V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 388–401.), only the anti-Sophiologist theological essay by

The State of Research

Although today the problem of allegorical iconographies, including the *Novgorod Sophia*, is a familiar scholarly subject, the consequences of the Sophia debate have determined the historiography. Firstly, the sophiological paradigm hinders scholars from addressing the problem of allegorical icon-painting from a historical perspective: what was the function of these novel icons in the historical context of their appearance? Why did the earlier iconographies prove unsatisfactory, hence the demand appeared to create new ones? To what extent were they related to earlier iconographic and artistic traditions, both in Rus and outside of it, and to what extent were they innovative? These questions have hardly ever been raised in art-historical studies. Instead, the emphasis is on their deviation from Orthodox tradition. It is indicative that, similarly to Florovsky and Ouspensky, a recent publication on the post-1547 Kremlin icons charges Metropolitan Makarii with ignorance by claiming that ‘he did not comprehend the theological content of icons, as he thought that they could be interpreted in a rational way by a set of signs or symbols which illustrate a certain text or a theological concept’.²⁸

Art-historical scholarship of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has been determined by the theological premises formulated during the Sophia debate. Accordingly, the main emphasis is on the Christological meaning of the image. Shortly after condemnation of Bulgakov’s Sophiology, Albert M. Ammann published two articles in which he classified the winged Sophia of the Novgorod icon as one type of Slavonic Angel-Christ representations. He identified the *Novgorod Sophia* firstly with the winged Wisdom-Christ images of the Balkan ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ iconography, and secondly with the images of *Christ, the Angel of the Great Counsel* which was disseminated widely in late Byzantine painting.²⁹ Paradoxically, he created this link by referencing to Metropolitan Makarii, who

Nikolai Gavriushin (under the name of Anthony, Metropolitan of Leningrad) discussed the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography (Metropolitan Antonii (Mel’nikov), ‘Iz istorii novgorodskoi lkonografii’, *Bogoslovskie trudy* 27 (1983): 61–80. Cf. N. K. Gavriushin, “‘I ellini premudrosti ishchut’: Zametki o sofologii’, in *Po sledam rytsarei Sofii* (Moscow: Star Inter, 1998), 69–114). Apart from them, the subject is strikingly absent from the large Soviet monographs on Novgorod icon-painting, such as: E. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, and E. A. Gordienko, *Zhivopis’ Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); V. K. Laurina and V. A. Pushkarev, *Novgorod Icons, 12th–17th Century* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1980); V. N. Lazarev, *Novgorodian Icon-Painting = Novgorodskaia ikonopis’* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1969); V. N. Lazarev, ‘Zhivopis’ i Skulptura Novgoroda’, in *IRI*, vol. II, 1954, 72–283; D. S. Likhachev, *Novgorod Velikii: ocherk istorii kul’tury Novgoroda XI–XVII vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1959); V. N. Lazarev, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1947).

²⁸ Sarab’ianov, ‘Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony’, 201. Here Sarabianov repeats, without reference, Florovsky’s hypothesis about the influence of Western mysticism and “rationalist” theology in Russia from the end of the fifteenth century, as well as its correlation with artistic trends. The idea of Makarii’s ignorance appeared in Nikolai Andreiev’s ground-breaking study on the Viskovatyi affair for the first time (N. E. Andreev, ‘O “Dele d’iaka Viskovatogo”’, *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932): 191–241).

²⁹ A. M. Ammann, ‘Slawische “Christus-Engel” Darstellungen’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 6 (1940): 475–7; A. M. Ammann, ‘Darstellung und Deutung der Sofia im vorpetrinischer Rusland’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 4 (1938): 143, 146.

never provided any explanation of the Sophia iconography, nor did he equate it with any of the winged Christ images which were discussed in the Viskovatyi Affair, as Ammann suggested.³⁰ Nevertheless, Ammann's articles, with their persuasive iconographic classifications, exercised a similar impact as Florovsky's Sophia study: the scholarly discussions of Christ's angelic representations and the Sophia iconography became intertwined.

Following the Sophia debate, there has been a consensus amongst theologians and art historians which serves as point of departure for all current interpretations of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon: the winged Sophia is Christ, the Angel of the Great Counsel. That there are a series of factors, primarily the commentary, which do not support this premise was attempted to be resolved mainly by two theories, both developed by theologians. The first belongs to Florovsky, who, as we have seen, suggested that the icon and its commentary were created under Western heterodox influence. Although Ammann's classification of Slavonic Angel-Christ representations challenged the Western origins of the Sophia iconography, the idea that the commentary, with its Marian allusions, was influenced by Western theological concepts remains alive.³¹

The other explanation can be linked to another eminent theologian, John Meyendorff, whose ground-breaking research on the fourteenth-century Hesychast controversy over Divine energies was in many aspects inspired by Florovsky's 'neopatristic synthesis'.³² Meyendorff pointed out that the Hesychast Patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheos Kokkinos (1353–4; 1364–76) wrote a treatise on the sophiological verses of the Proverbs which names the Divine energies, belonging to the Holy Trinity, as Sophia.³³ Significantly, Philotheos had close ecclesiastical-cultural contacts with Rus and many of his works were translated into Slavonic.

³⁰ Ammann, 'Slawische "Christus-Engel" Darstellungen', 475; Ammann, 'Darstellung und Deutung der Sofia', 143.

³¹ Ammann, 'Darstellung und Deutung der Sofia', 155. For the 'Western' theory: S. Zolotarev, 'Vopros o posviashchenii novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora v trudakh russkikh religioznykh myslitelei XIX—pervoi poloviny XX veka', *Novgorod i novgorodskaia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 4 (2011): 161; S. Zolotarev, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia: Problemy i perspektivy religiozno-filosofskogo i iskusstvovedcheskogo osmysleniia', *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 44–45 (2008): 266–9; Antonii (Mel'nikov), 'Iz istorii novgorodskoi ikonografii', 72–5.

³² S. Tanev has demonstrated that the rediscovery of the Hesychast controversy in the twentieth century can also be linked with Florovsky and the Sophia debate: S. Tanev, 'ENERGIEIA vs. SOFIA', *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2, no. 1 (2011): 15–71. Meyendorff explicitly challenged Sophiology in his studies on the iconography of Sophia (I. F. Meiendorf, 'Tema "Premudrosti" v vostochnoevropeskoj srednevekovoi kul'ture i ee nasledii', in *Literatura i iskusstvo v sisteme kul'tury*, ed. V. B. Piotrovskii (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 251; Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia', 401). For Meyendorff's relationship to Florovsky and the 'neopatristic synthesis': Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky*, 246. For an introduction to Byzantine Hesychast controversy by Meyendorff himself: J. Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998).

³³ Meiendorf, 'Tema "Premudrosti"', 250; Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia', 392–3; J. Meyendorff, 'L'icongraphie de la Sagesse Divine dans la tradition byzantine', *Cahiers archéologiques* 10 (1959): 262. For Philotheos's treatise with the edition of the text: Archimandrite Arsenii (Ivashchenko), *Filofeia, patriarkha konstantinopol'skogo XIV veka tri rechi k episkopu Ignatiiu, s ob'iasneniem izrecheniia Pritchei: Premudrost' sozda sebe dom i proch* (Novgorod: Parovaia tip. I. I. Ignatovskogo, 1898).

These translations, however, do not include his Hesychast writings.³⁴ Using Philotheos's Greek text and relying on Ammann's iconographic studies, Meyendorff has speculated that the red, fiery face of Sophia on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon represents the Divine energy belonging to the Holy Trinity who is visualized by the three different representations of Christ in the icon (Emmanuel, Angel-Christ, and adult Christ). Thus, in Meyendorff's interpretation, the *Novgorod Sophia* is a Hesychast Trinitarian image.

Meyendorff's hypothesis, which is widely accepted today, has further implications.³⁵ Notably, the icon, which on the basis of stylistic analysis is considered to be the earliest extant example of *Novgorod Sophia* iconography, does not show any distinguishing feature of Novgorod painting (Cat. 1; Fig. 0.4). It is believed to be the work of a Moscow or Tver icon-painter, rather than that of a Novgorodian. To resolve this contradiction, Lev Lifshits used Meyendorff's Hesychast interpretation: he associated this icon, today kept in the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral, with Arsenii, bishop of Tver (1390–1409) who had direct connections with Byzantine Hesychasts.³⁶ He was a member of the close circle of Kiprian, the Metropolitan of Kyiv (1375–1406), who, in his turn, was appointed by Patriarch Philotheos.³⁷ Lifshits argued that the icon in the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral, the earliest *Novgorod Sophia* icon, was painted in Tver, during the lifetime of Arsenii, in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Another recent proposition belongs to Tatiana Tsarevskaya who put forward that the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography had been created in Byzantium and disseminated in central Rus before its appearance in Novgorod: it was seen by Evfimii II, archbishop of Novgorod (1428–56) when he was in Moscow in 1437 and then it was copied in the fresco decoration of the Archiepiscopal Palace in 1441.³⁸

³⁴ G. M. Prokhorov, 'Tak vossiiaut pravedniki...': *Vizantiiskaia literatura XIV veka v Drevnei Rusi* (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo O. Abyshko, 2009), 120–265.

³⁵ Meyendorff's Hesychast theory was developed further by Lifshits: L. Lifšic, 'Die Ikone "Sophia-Weisheit Gottes" aus der Sammlung der Museen des Moskauer Kreml: Zur Frage nach der Herkunft und der Zeit des ersten Auftauchens des sogenannten "Novgoroder" ikonographischen Typs', in *Die Weisheit baute ihr Haus: Untersuchungen zu hymnischen und didaktischen Ikonen*, ed. E. Hausteinhart and K. Ch. Felmy (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1999), 29–41; E. Ostašenko, 'Sofia Sapientia Divina', in *Sophia* 1999, 72–5; E. Ia. Ostashenko, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhiia', in *Sofia* 2000, 40–3; Hunt, 'The Novgorod Sophia Icon', 26–37.

³⁶ Lifšic, 'Die Ikone "Sophia-Weisheit Gottes"', 40–1.

³⁷ For Metropolitan Kiprian: J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the 14th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 197–260. For Arsenii, Bishop of Tver: E. L. Koniavskaia, 'Arsenii Tverskoï', in *PE*, vol. III, 2001, 385–7.

³⁸ T. Iu. Tsarevskaya, 'Programmye osnovy pervonachal'noi freskovoi dekoratsii severo-zapadnogo pomescheniia Vladychnoi palaty (kel'i Ioanna) v Novgorodskom kremle', *Aktual'nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* 9 (2019): 476. Tsarevskaya attributed this bold hypothesis erroneously to me. In a subsequent article (Tsarevskaya, 'Rannii variant', 167.) she modified her views. According to this new hypothesis, the Kremlin icon was copied in Moscow (or Tver?) in the early 1440s, from a Novgorod original seen in Novgorod. The person, who spread the new iconography, might have been Pachomius the Serbian, the famous writer who moved from Novgorod to Moscow in this period.



Fig. 0.4. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon, first half of the fifteenth century. Annunciation Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow.

Although the interpretative framework of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has been determined by the premise that Sophia is the Angel-Christ, as well as by the Hesychast and Western theories, its explanations in recent scholarly publications cover nearly all fields of Christian theology and not just those which were mentioned by Pavel Florensky: Triadology, Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, Mariology, ecclesiology, Eucharistic doctrine, theology of Creation, Eschatology,

ethics, and mysticism. Moreover, the political interpretation of the Sophia icon is also frequent, primarily in publications on the history of Novgorod and its coins.³⁹ As a result, the challenge today is to systematize all the available information regarding the Sophia icon and reconcile its different interpretations, an endeavour for which numerous attempts have been made in the last decades.⁴⁰

Amongst these, the *Sophia—the Wisdom of God* exhibition held in Rome in 1999 and thereafter in Moscow in 2000, is particularly significant.⁴¹ The concept of this exhibition reflected the ideas of Sophiologists concerning the different aspects of Sophia.⁴² Here the *Novgorod Sophia* icon was associated with iconographies that were attributed to sophiological meanings.⁴³ Whilst the exhibition demonstrated the inextricable intertwining of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography with the extremely rich allegorical traditions of late medieval Russian icon-painting, the art-historical presentations and interpretations of these sophiological or supposedly sophiological iconographies were methodologically flawed by an approach that neglected the historical aspects. As a result, they were unable to place the different innovative Russian iconographies in their historical context. In the exhibition catalogue, like most other publications on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, the question of why this enigmatic iconography was created remained unanswered. Despite numerous studies, the basic meaning and origin of the

³⁹ Z. A. Brzozowska, *Sofia—upersonifikowana Mądrość Boża. Dzieje wyobrażeń w kręgu kultury bizantyjsko-słowiańskiej* (Lodz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015); A. Musin, 'Russian Medieval Culture as an "Area of Preservation" of the Byzantine Civilization', in *Towards Rewriting?: New Approaches to Byzantine Archaeology and Art*, ed. P. L. Grotowski and S. Skrzyniarz (Warsaw: Polish Society of Oriental Art; Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, 2010), 33–5; V. A. Burov, *Ocherki istorii i arkhologii srednevekovogo Novgoroda* (Moscow: Institut arkhologii RAN, 1994), 185–6; V. L. Ianin, *Denezhno-vesovye sistemy russkogo srednevekov'ia: domongol'skii period.*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2009), 288–96; A. V. Artsikhovskii, 'Izobrazheniia na novgorodskikh monetakh', *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR. Serii istorii i filosofii* 5, no. 1 (1948): 99–106; P. L. Gusev, 'Simvol' vlasti v Velikom Novgorode, 1. Sviataia Sofiia', *Vestnik istorii i arkhologii* 21 (1911): 105–13. For further bibliography: M. A. L'vov, 'Eshche raz k voprosu ob izobrazhenii na novgorodskikh monetakh', in *Proshloe nashei rodiny v pamiatnikakh numizmatiki*, ed. V. M. Potin (Leningrad: Gos. Ermitazh, 1977), 12–36.

⁴⁰ Brzozowska, *Sofia*; Zolotarev, 'Sofii Premudrost' Bozhii'; A. Deyneka, 'The Ackland Sophia: Contextualizing, Interpreting, and "Containing" Wisdom' (MA, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2007); V. G. Briusova, *Sofii Premudrost' Bozhii v drevnerusskoi literature i iskusstve* (Moscow: Belyi gorod, 2006); L. I. Lifshits, 'Premudrost' v russkoi ikonopisi', *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 61 (2002): 138–50; S. N. Gukova, 'Sofii Premudrost' Bozhii', *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 9 (2003): 197–220; Hunt, 'The Novgorod Sophia Icon'; P. Balcárek, 'The Image of Sophia in Medieval Russian Iconography and Its Sources', *Byzantinoslavica* 60 (1999): 593–610; N. V. Kvilidze, 'Ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei i osobennosti novgorodskoi liturgicheskoi traditsii v kontse XV veka', in *Sakral'naia topografiia srednevekovogo goroda*, ed. L. A. Beliaev and A. L. Batalov (Moscow: Institut khristianskoi kul'tury srednevekov'ia, 1998), 86–99; D. M. Fiene, 'What Is the Appearance of Divine Sophia?', *Slavic Review* 48, no. 3 (1989): 449–76.

⁴¹ *Sofia* 2000; *Sophia* 1999.

⁴² L. I. Lifshits, 'Chto Tia narechem!: "Sofii Premudrost' Bozhii" v russkoi ikone', *Nashe Nasledie. Illiustrirrovannyi istoriko-kul'turnyi zhurnal* 65 (2003): 30–43; Lifshits, 'Premudrost' v russkoi ikonopisi'.

⁴³ Discussions of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography: *Sofia* 2000, 40–3, 74–5, 152–3, 190–3, 274–7, 328–31; *Sophia* 1999, 72–5; 106–7; 184–5; 222–5; 306–9; 356–7; 360–1.

Novgorod Sophia iconography, as well as its place in the history of Russian art has not yet been clarified. This book addresses this lacuna.

Research Questions and Objectives

This research explores the meaning, function, and historical context of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography. In broader terms, however, by investigating the Wisdom icon, the aim of this study is to examine the historical roots and specific features of allegorical trends of Russian icon-painting, the appearance of which in mid-sixteenth-century Moscow led to the Viskovatyi affair. Accordingly, the focal point of this book is the earliest history of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography and its commentary. Their subsequent development, together with the history of other sophiological images (most importantly, the iconography of ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’) will be discussed only to the extent relevant to the exploration of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon’s origins.

There are three main reasons why this monograph has been dedicated to the study of the *Novgorod Sophia*. Firstly, it is arguably the earliest of the disputed Russian iconographies mentioned in the Viskovatyi Affair. Secondly, its historiography, as we have seen, fundamentally influenced the scholarship on all other late medieval Russian allegorical iconographies. Thirdly, this icon has a commentary which serves as the basis for its investigation. Moreover, this is the first extant Russian commentary on icons which was to be followed by others: interestingly, Makarii’s explanations of icons in the Viskovatyi Affair clearly reflect the structural characteristics of this and subsequent icon commentaries.⁴⁴ Thus, the investigation of the first commentary can provide valuable information about the new allegorical trends in fifteenth-sixteenth-century Russian icon-painting.

In methodological terms, the chief aim of this study is to separate the investigation of the Sophia icon from the so-called sophiological paradigm. This will be achieved by abandoning the Florovskian idea of ‘returning to the Fathers’ and replacing it by the concept of ‘returning to medieval sources’. Metropolitan Makarii’s attempt to legitimize the iconographies, disputed by Viskovatyi, by references to biblical, liturgical, and patristic texts clearly indicates that medieval Russian allegorical iconographies are always connected with texts.⁴⁵ It is the art historian’s task to link the iconographies with *relevant* texts.

⁴⁴ For another famous commentary, explaining the icon ‘You are a priest forever’, see Kriza, ‘The Russian Gnadestuhl’, 113–16.

⁴⁵ Although scholars often consider Makarii’s explanations arbitrary or irrelevant (cf. Sarab’ianov, ‘Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony’, 201.), this study, which seeks to highlight the characteristics of medieval Russian icon commentaries, will challenge this claim. For this question see also Kriza, ‘The Russian Gnadestuhl’.

Scholars of medieval Russian art and culture often propose that there is an evident overlap between the texts of the Church Fathers accessible in modern publications, translations, and the reception of this patristic tradition in Rus. This assumption, however, is erroneous: only a small fraction of Byzantine theological literature was available in Slavonic. Furthermore, a great proportion of those texts which were indeed accessible and read in Rus have never been translated into modern languages or even published. In iconographic studies, the citation of those texts which could have never been read by the creators of the iconography, leads to ahistorical explanations. For example, the writings of Byzantine Hesychasts on the Divine energies, with the sole exemption of David Disypatos's brief fragments, were unknown in medieval Rus.⁴⁶ For that very reason a Hesychast interpretation of the Sophia icon cannot be convincing: the idea that Greek texts, without Slavonic translation, might have inspired the creation of such a significant Russian iconography as the *Novgorod Sophia* icon can be ruled out.

In contrast, the commentary on the Sophia icon will be at the heart of this study. The surprising neglect of this text in the historiography can be explained by three main factors. First, its use in support of Florensky's sophiological theory made it an unreliable source, as according to Florovsky's hypothesis, it was influenced by Western theological writings. Second, without a profound study of the textual history of the commentary, it has been often proposed that the commentary is later than the image itself, therefore it cannot be used for the analysis of the initial meaning of the iconography.⁴⁷ Finally, the previously mentioned incomprehensibility of the text has prevented scholars from using it as historical source.

Conversely, based on the textual analysis of the commentary (see the Critical edition in the Appendix) and the historical survey of the development of the Sophia iconography (see the Catalogue), the preposition of this study is that the commentary and the image were created nearly simultaneously in the fifteenth century, therefore they must be investigated together. Accordingly, a great challenge of this research is to develop a methodology by which the Sophia commentary can be deciphered. This investigation will raise the problem of allegory in medieval Russian art: the relationship between text and image—the obscure commentary and the enigmatic icon. The expectation is that the results of this methodological experiment will be applicable to other iconographies, especially to those which, similarly to the *Novgorod Sophia*, have a commentary or an explanation by Metropolitan Makarii.

The reconsideration of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon requires the application of the methodologies of different disciplines. Apart from philology and art history,

⁴⁶ Prokhorov, *Tak vossiiaiut pravedniki...*, 15–53.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hunt, 'The Novgorod Sophia Icon', 14, 35.

theological and historical approaches will also be utilized. The interdisciplinary character of the research is reflected in the structure of the book which consists of four main parts: WORD, IMAGE, IDENTITY, and HISTORY. Unlike art historical investigations, the starting point will be the WORD, the commentary, as, undoubtedly, it is the neglect of this text that led earlier studies on Sophia iconography astray. The analysis of the commentary will be followed by an iconographical study of the Novgorod Wisdom image in the part IMAGE. The exploration of the direct sources of its singular iconographic elements will lead to the analysis of the wider visual and theological context of the icon in the part IDENTITY. Finally, the part HISTORY will reveal the concrete historical circumstances of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography.

PART I
WORD

1

The Icon and Its Commentary

The appearance of novel allegorical trends in Russian painting from the fifteenth century onwards was preceded by similar phenomena in late Byzantine art. In Byzantium, the emergence of iconographic allegorism inspired the textual explanations of images. Byzantine authors utilized the ancient literary genre *ekphrasis*, the rhetorical depiction of works of art to explain the visual.¹ One such explanation was written by the Greek monk, Makarios Makres in the fifteenth century. He explored the meaning of the thirteenth-century iconographic innovation, the visualization of the Christmas liturgical hymn (sticheron) ‘*What shall we offer to you, Christ.*’ The narrative scene of the Nativity is represented as a praise of Christ seated in the bosom of the enthroned Virgin and adored by the creation. In accordance with the liturgical text, not only the angels, the shepherds, and the magi venerate him, but also the desert and the earth, personified by female figures (Fig. 1.1).² In his *ekphrasis*, Makarios Makres, according to the rules of classical rhetoric, describes the picture and, then, expands this description with explanation: ‘This art work represents the desert which offers the crib not in its real, but unreal form. For, as a shadow, the depiction of a wrinkled, emaciated old woman represents the desert.’³

Facing a similar need for explanation of images in Rus, the literary tools of *ekphrasis* could have been helpful for Rus authors. *Ekphrasis*, however, as Simon Franklin observed, ‘is most unlikely to have been part of a bookman’s training in Rus’.⁴ The lack of this classical rhetorical tradition was one of the factors

¹ For the Post-Iconoclastic Byzantine *ekphrasis*: L. James and R. Webb, “‘To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places’: *Ekphrasis* and Art in Byzantium”, *Art History* 14, no. 1 (1991): 13.

² For Makarios Makres’ *ekphrasis* on the image ‘*What shall we offer to you, Christ.*’: T. Starodubcev, ‘Sticheron “What Shall We Offer You, Christ”: A Description and a Painting’, *Cahiers Balkaniques* 31 (2000): 21–37; R. Stichel, *Die Geburt Christi in der russischen Ikonenmalerei* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990), 69–70; H. Hunger, ‘Eine Spätbyzantinische Bildbeschreibung der Geburt Christi’, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1958): 125–40. For the iconography of ‘*What shall we offer to you*’ or *Synaxis of Theotokos* (first extant example at Ohrid, Peribleptos/1295!): V. D. Sarab’ianov, “‘Uspenie Bogomateri” i “Rozhdestvo Khristovo” v sisteme dekoratsii sobora Antonieva monastyrja i ikh ikonograficheskii protograf’, *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 5 (2001): 29–39; Starodubcev, ‘Sticheron “What Shall We Offer You, Christ”’; M. A. Orlova, ‘O formirovanii ikonografii rozhdstvenskoi stikhiry “Chto Ti prinsem . . .”’, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Balkany. Rus*, ed. O. E. Etingof and A. I. Komech (St Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1995), 127–41; Stichel, *Die Geburt Christi*, 118–20.

³ Hunger, ‘Eine Spätbyzantinische Bildbeschreibung’, 126–7.

⁴ S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 249.



Fig. 1.1. 'What shall we offer to you, Christ', fresco, the Church of the Theotokos Peribleptos (St Clement), Ohrid, 1294–5.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

contributing to the appearance of a new genre in Russian literature in around the mid-fifteenth century: the commentary on icons.

The earliest surviving example of this genre is the commentary on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon from the mid-fifteenth century and was later followed by further texts explaining other obscure subjects. The icon commentaries have been preserved in diverse ways, usually incorporated into different types of texts, or sometimes inscribed in icons themselves. The commentaries remained popular until as recently as the nineteenth century.⁵ The Sophia commentary was followed by the explanation of the so-called Old Testament Trinity icon from the end of the fifteenth century, written by Iosif Volotskii (Joseph of Volokolamsk; † 1515), the famous Russian theologian, which has been preserved in his *Enlightener*.⁶ Another well-known commentary on the icon 'You are a priest forever' influenced

⁵ Hitherto the only attempt to survey these commentary texts is Buslaev's 1861 study: F. I. Buslaev, 'Literatura russkikh ikonopisnykh podlinnikov', in *Istoricheskie ocherki russkoi narodnoi slovesnosti i iskusstva*, vol. II (St Petersburg, 1861), 330–90.

⁶ Á. Kriza, 'Legitimizing the Rublev Trinity: Byzantine Iconophile Arguments in Medieval Russian Debates over the Representation of the Divine', *Byzantinoslavica* 74 (2016): 134–52; Á. Kriza, *A középkori orosz képvédő irodalom I. Bizánci források* (Budapest: Russica Pannonicana, 2011), 290–2.

Metropolitan Makarii's explanations of icons in the Viskovatyi Affair.⁷ The fact that the Wisdom icon was the first icon, which, according to our current knowledge, was commented on, proves both the innovative character and the significance of this image. Therefore, the focal point of the investigations of the WORD part of this book is this commentary. This part will trace the birth of the genre of commentary on icons, identify its specifics and significance, and develop a methodology which assists in its decoding. This methodology allows the exploration of the meaning of the Sophia icon that was attributed to it by contemporaries, thus serving as a starting point for its reconsideration.

The Sophia commentary has several redactions (see the Critical edition in the Appendix). The first and longest redaction has been preserved in one manuscript from the 1450s: today it is in the Tikhomirov collection in Novosibirsk, but on a linguistic basis it has been localized to North Rus, i.e. supposedly to the Novgorod region.⁸ It was soon followed by the second redaction in three manuscripts dated roughly to the middle and second half of the fifteenth century. The earliest manuscript of the second redaction (Chud. 320) derives from Moscow. The sole fifteenth-century manuscript of the third redaction, which will be discussed in Chapter 12, was copied by monk Efrosin in the Kirillo-Belozersk monastery in the 1470s. The text, titled '*Words selected from numerous books, questions and answers and different passages*' in its first two redactions, begins as follows:

The purity of ineffable virginity, the truth of humble wisdom has Christ above the head, as the head is Wisdom, Son, the Word of God. Stretched out heaven above the Lord—he bowed the heaven and descended into the Virgin. For those who love virginity become like the Mother of God, for she gave birth to the Son. Those who love virginity give birth to words of virtue, that is, they teach the insane. The Baptist loved it, and baptized the Lord Jesus Christ, for in baptizing he showed that the rule of virginity—was a rigorous life in God. John the Theologian also loved it and he had become worthy to lean on the breast of the Lord and to be the beloved disciple.⁹

Thereafter, the commentary runs through some of the elements of the Sophia image, giving a short explanation of them: the face of fire—the fire of the divinity; imperial crown—humble wisdom reigns over passions; high flying fiery wings—prophecy; sceptre—imperial dignity, etc.

⁷ Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', 113–16.

⁸ V. V. Itkin, 'Tolkovaniia Afanasiia mnikha i Poslanie Klimenta Smoliaticha v drevnerusskikh rukopisnykh sbornikakh', in *Kniga i literatura v kulturnom kontekste: sbornik nauchnykh trudov, posviashchennykh 35-letiiu arkhograf. raboty v Sibiri (1965–2000 gg.)*, ed. E. I. Dergacheva-Skop and V. N. Alekseev (Novosibirsk: GPNTB SO RAN, 2003), 92.

⁹ For the critical edition and the translation of the Sophia commentary, see the Appendix.

When we compare this text with Byzantine *ekphrasis*, the difference is striking: the description of the image itself is absent from the text; even the fact that the object of the commentary is a *picture* is not evident. Only the clear references to the iconographic details of the Sophia icon (the figures of the Mother of God and John the Baptist, the face of fire; ribbon; wings; crown; sceptre; throne; etc.) betray that the text comments on this image. Otherwise it hints only to the ‘purity of ineffable virginity’ and ‘the truth of humble wisdom’ which suggests that it explains a combined personification of virginity and wisdom. The reference to the actual icon appears only in the sixteenth-century versions of the commentary.¹⁰

In the first redaction, the commentary is followed by two passages (Sections II and III in the Critical edition): the first (Section II) praises the angelic-virginal life and has the incipit *Pechati devstva*, that is *The Seal of Virginity*; the second (Section III) is a listing of the details of an imperial, bridal, and monastic vestment, accompanied again by short explanations. It is known as an independent text from two fifteenth-century manuscripts, one of which is a legal miscellany called *Merilo Pravednoe (Just Measure)*.¹¹ Konstantin Vershinin, who studied the textual history of the *Merilo Pravednoe*, named this text *The Fountain of Wisdom (Istochnik premudrosti)* following its incipit in a *Merilo Pravednoe* manuscript, copied in the third quarter of the fifteenth century (RGADA, Mazur. 640, ff. 355v–357v).¹² In the second redaction of the Sophia commentary, *The Seal of Virginity* is missing, the commentary is followed immediately by *The Fountain of Wisdom*, whereas the third redaction does not contain *The Fountain of Wisdom*, only the first passage on virginal life. Later versions of the Sophia commentary do not contain these additional passages whatsoever.

It is not entirely clear from the manuscripts, when the commentary finishes, and the subsequent entries start: as a result, Nikol’skii’s 1906 edition of the commentary included *The Fountain of Wisdom*.¹³ Nevertheless, both the layout of these two passages in the manuscripts (see the Critical edition in the Appendix) and the analysis of their content (in Chapter 2) suggest that the creator of the commentary wished to create a closer link between these two additional passages and the commentary on the Sophia icon.

Furthermore, the wider context of the commentary in those four manuscripts, in which the first and second redactions have been preserved, is a permanent block

¹⁰ For example: ‘On Sophia, the Wisdom of God, copied from the local image which is in Great Novgorod.’ MDA 16, f. 99r.

¹¹ RNB, Sof. 1262, f. 10r–10v (*Trifonov Collection*, early fifteenth century); RGADA, Mazur. 640, f. 357r–357v (third quarter of the fifteenth century, but preserving an earlier text tradition). K. V. Vershinin, *Merilo Pravednoe v istorii drevnerusskoi knizhnosti i prava* (Moscow and St Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2019), 202–8.

¹² Vershinin, 205.

¹³ Nikol’skii, ‘Sofia, Premudrost’ Bozhii: Novgorodskaia redaktsiia ikony i sluzhba sv. Sofii’, 79–81. This edition of Chud. 320 ff. 341r–343v also contains entries 9 and 10 from the block surrounding the Sophia commentary, cf. Table 1 in the Appendix. A re-edition of this text with Russian translation: Iu. K. Begunov, *Skazaniia Novgoroda Velikogo (IX–XIV vv.)* (St Petersburg: Politekhnik, 2004), 172–6.

of ten writings which are more or less closely related to the Sophia commentary (see Table 1 in the Appendix)—both formally and conceptually.¹⁴ It consists of short allegorical-exegetical passages on Old Testament books, mainly on the books of Solomon (Proverbs and Song of Songs); there is a text on King Solomon's prophecy of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection (*The Legend of Solomon's Chalice*) and another on the Jewish King Jehoash's dream about the personified Ecclesia and Synagoga. The longest passage of this block is an exegetical compilation entitled *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian*, containing different explanations of the Old Testament in the form of questions and responses (see Chapter 3).

The content of the manuscripts preserving the early redactions of the commentary is the same: the text on the Sophia icon is surrounded by commentaries on the Bible, the overwhelming majority of which are written in the form of question and answer. The Solovki miscellany has been labelled a 'Bible in questions and answers';¹⁵ the Novosibirsk manuscript is a unique collection of the most diverse types of questions and responses on different subjects (including but not limited to: legal, dogmatical, liturgical, ascetical, anthropological, astrological, and, above all, exegetical) and of diverse origin, including a special set made from the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, a collection of ca. sixth-century works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.¹⁶

Thus, the first Russian commentary on icons appeared in an exegetical context, as one of the commentaries on the Solomonian books. In addition, this commentary is not a mere exegesis, but, as its original title also suggests ('*Words selected from numerous books, questions and answers and different passages*'), a special version of questions and responses. The genre of the commentary is clearly visible in the manuscripts from the sixteenth century onwards, where the questions and answers are distinguished by red ink (*rubrum*) and the words 'tolkovanie' (commentary), or even 'vopros' (question), appear.¹⁷ Therefore, the first thing we can conclude is that, while in Byzantium *ekphrasis* was the genre used for commenting on icons, in Rus the question-and-response format was applied instead.

The analysis of the text, therefore, must begin with an investigation of the literary technique used in it. The Christian exegetical questions and responses, or *erotapokrisesis*, of classical origin is closely related to the late antique exegetical

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition, see the Critical edition in the Appendix.

¹⁵ A. S. Arkhangel'skii, *Tvoreniia otsov tserkvi v drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti: izvlecheniia iz rukopisei i opyty istoriko-literaturnykh izuchenii*, vol. I (Kazan: Tip. Imp. un-ta, 1889), 160.

¹⁶ The transcription of the *Areopagitiki* in question-and-answer form: V. V. Itkin, 'Izbrannye vypiski iz sochinenii Dionisiia Areopagita v drevnerusskikh sbornikakh', accessed 3 June 2020, https://nsu.ru/classics/dionysius/itkin_6d.htm. See also: V. V. Itkin, "'Tsennonnaia" sbornikovaia pedaktsiia korpUSA sochinenii Dionisiia Areopagita', accessed 3 June 2020, https://nsu.ru/classics/dionysius/itkin_1d1.htm.

¹⁷ MDA 16, f. 99r–99v. For the sophiological exegesis of Proverbs 9 in Slavic *Corpus Dionysiacum*: G. M. Prokhorov, 'Poslanie Titu—Ierarkhu Dionisiia Areopagita v slavianskom perevode i ikonografii "Premudrost' sozda sebe dom"', *TODRL* 38 (1985): 7–41.

traditions.¹⁸ The form of question and answer reflects an enigma hidden in the Bible and unwrapped by the answer: what was the author's intention in saying this? Therefore erotapokriseis 'are usually defined as a form of allegorical exegesis'.¹⁹ Christian allegorical exegesis was developed by early church fathers, most prominently by Origen (†254), who distinguished between the historical-bodily and allegorical-spiritual layers of meanings of the Scripture. Another special feature of the erotapokriseis is excerpting and abbreviation: its short answers are either parts of a larger work, which serves as a basic text for the answer of the erotapokriseis, or summaries, in a few words, of a more complex teaching. The question focuses on one single image or narrative of the Bible, which is decoded by a few keywords in the answer. These keywords invoke associations, which point to further textual context, to a wider theological or moral content. Formally, textually and physically in the manuscripts, the erotapokriseis are in close connection with catena, Bible commentaries, and scholia written to the most prominent texts of patristic literature (for example, as we have seen, to the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite). Thus, the questions and answers, collecting together both the appreciated pieces of the patristic exegetical and the selected teachings of the Orthodox theological heritage, must be considered a highly important tool of learning in Rus, where this literary device gained exceptional popularity.

One of the most famous pieces of both allegorical exegesis and Slavonic erotapokriseis is the commentary on the verses of Proverbs about Wisdom (9:1–5): 'Wisdom has built her house.' In the allegorical exegesis of Proverbs 9:1, the figure of Wisdom (in Greek: *Σοφία*—Sophia) alludes to Christ, the Son of God, while the house is the allegorical image of the flesh which Christ took on in the incarnation, as well as the Church which is defined as his body (Eph 1:23; 5:23). Accordingly, Wisdom's invitation to eat her bread, and drink her wine (9:5),

¹⁸ L. Perrone, 'Questions and Responses', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. P. M. Blowers and P. W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 198–209; A. Kazhdan, 'Erotapokriseis', in *ODB*, vol. I, 1991, 727; H. Dörrie and H. Dörries, 'Erotapokriseis', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Th. Klauser, vol. VI (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966), 342–70. For late antique and patristic exegetical traditions: Ch. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 167–256.

¹⁹ A. Miltenova, 'Slavonic Erotapokriseis: Sources, Transmission, Morphology of the Genre', in *The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Slavonic Tradition: Continuity and Diversity*, ed. L. DiTommaso, Ch. Böttrich, and M. Swoboda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 299. See also: A. Miltenova, *Erotapokriseis: Süchineniia ot kratki vüprosi i otgovori v starobülgarskata literatura* (Sofia: Damian Iakov, 2004); V. N. Mochul'skii, *Sledy narodnoi biblii v slavyanskoi i drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti* (Odessa: Tip. Sht. Voisk Odesskogo voen. Okr., 1893). For the erotapokriseis in Rus: M. G. Babalyk, *Apokrif 'Beseda trekh sviatitelei' v russkoi rukopisnoi knizhnosti: issledovanie i teksty* (LAP LAMBERT, 2012); V. V. Itkin, 'Drevnerusskii tolkovyi sbornik v literaturnom kontekste XI–XVI vekov: chernovik avtoreferata disertatsii', accessed 3 June 2020, https://nsu.ru/classics/dionysius/itkin_avt.htm; A. A. Alekseev, *Tekstologiiia slavyanskoi Biblii* (St Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1999); N. K. Nikol'skii, *O literaturnykh trudakh Mitropolita Klimenta Kholmitskogo, pisatel'ia XII veka* (St Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1892); V. M. Istrin, 'Zamechaniia o Sostave Tolkovoi Palei, IV: Kniga Kaaf', *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi akademii nauk*, 1897, 845–905.

is understood as reference to the Christian Eucharist, the consecrated bread and wine which is believed to be the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 11:23–7). This popular commentary is present already in one of the earliest extant Rus manuscripts from 1073.²⁰ The passage lists the images of Proverbs, giving short explanations of them which unfold their Christological, ecclesiological, and Eucharistic meanings:

[Q:] Who is the *wisdom* who *built her house* (Prov 9:1)?

[A:] Christ the wisdom and power of God and Father (1Cor 1:24) [built] his body, because *the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us* (John 1:14).

[Q:] *She supported it with seven pillars* (Prov 9:1).

[A:] Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as said Isaiah: ‘The Spirit of God shall rest upon him (Isa 11:2).’

[Q:] *She offered her sacrifices* (Prov 9:2).

[A:] The prophets were killed by infidels for the truth who cried out ‘we died for your deeds in all days and *were led as a sheep to the slaughter* (Isa 53:7).’

[Q:] *She mixed her wine in a bowl* (Prov 9:2).

[A:] In the Virgin, she united her Godhead with flesh, like wine; and Saviour, unchangeable God and man, was born from her.

[Q:] *And prepared her table* (Prov 9:2).

[A:] We confess the knowledge of Trinity.

[Q:] *She sent her servants, inviting people to the bowl with a lofty proclamation ‘He who is without discernment, let him turn aside to me* (Prov 9:3–4).’

[A:] [She sent] Apostles in the whole world, inviting all the lands to knowledge of God.

[Q:] *And those in need of discernment, she says* (Prov 9:4).

[A:] Those who still do not have the power of the Holy Ghost.

[Q:] *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine, which I mixed for you* (Prov 9:5).

[A:] He gave us to eat and drink his divine flesh and holy blood, for the remission of sins.²¹

The basic text of these erotapokriseis is Hippolytus of Rome’s (170–235) ancient commentary on Proverbs, which can be read here in a shortened and altered

²⁰ Anastasius Sinaita. *Questiones et responsiones* (Question 42—a later addition) CPG 7746. Edition: P. N. Dinekov, ed., *Simeonov sbornik v tri toma: po Svetoslavoviiu prepis ot 1073 g.*, vol. I (Sofia: Izd-vo na Bŭlgarskata akademiia na naukite, 1991), 504–5. (B. A. Rybakov, ed., *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073 goda: Faksimil’noe izdanie*, vol. II (Moscow: Kniga, 1983), ff. 155B–156a.) See also: H. Watrobska, ‘The Izbornik of the XIIIth Century: Text in Transcription’, *Polata Knigopisnaia* 19 (1987): 23–4; V. G. Briusova, ‘Tolkovanie na IX pritchu Solomona v Izbornike 1073 g.’, in *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073 g.: sbornik statei*, ed. B. A. Rybakov (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 306. Greek original: PG 89, 593; M. V. Bibikov, *Vizantiiskii prototip drevneishei slavianskoi knigi: Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073 g.* (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 1996), 250. The manuscripts of the Sophia commentary also contain it: TSL 122, f. 151r; Sol. 807, f. 404r; Tikh. 397, f. 130r.

²¹ Watrobska, ‘The Izbornik of the XIIIth Century’, 23. Highlighted words are unacknowledged biblical quotations.

form.²² This biblical passage, however, became central in the Arian controversy, when based on Proverbs 8:22 ('The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways for his works'), Arius (†336) argued in favour of the created nature of Wisdom-Christ.²³ Athanasius of Alexandria's (†373) lengthy and detailed allegorical explanations of Proverbs written against Arius, in his second *Discourse* was translated into Slavonic by the tenth century.²⁴ Correspondingly, Hippolytus's commentary on the images of Proverbs in the Slavonic and Rus question-and-answer manuscripts was intended to recall the anti-Arian patristic teaching about Christ's dual (divine and human) nature by disseminating this complex exegesis with its combined Christological, Eucharistic, and ecclesiological references.²⁵ What we can see here is Church Slavic and Byzantine mnemonics: the biblical images are associated with an exegetical clue or a theological doctrine, which recollect further associations, and invoke a contemporary context: current theological debates, doctrinal and moral aspects.

Erotapokriseis operate with enigmas, obscure and unclear places in the Scripture. The questions expect answers from the active readers and prompt them to decipher the riddles, thus stimulating a learning process. This particular way of acquisition of knowledge is of biblical origin. Christ himself claimed that he spoke in parables to the people, because the apostles 'have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand"' (Luke 8:10, cf. Matt 13:11–16; Mark 4:11–12; Isa 6:9). The parable, therefore, hides and reveals the mystery at the same time: 'These things I have spoken to you in figurative language, but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language'—said Christ elsewhere (John 17:25). The unveiling of a parable requires the opening of the eyes, ears, and heart, making an inner effort. Christ used the parable in accordance with its Old Testament meaning:

'The Proverbs of Solomon . . . to understand true righteousness . . . for a wise man who hears these things will be wiser, and the man of understanding will gain direction. He will understand both a parable and a hidden saying, both wise words and riddles. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom . . . , but the ungodly despise wisdom and instruction (Prov 1:1–8).'

²² *Commentarii in Proverbia* CPG 1883. For Hippolytus: Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 528–35.

²³ Kannengiesser, 684–705, 997–1009; Ch. Kannengiesser, 'Lady Wisdom's Final Call: The Patristic Recovery of Proverbs 8', in *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter, S.J.*, ed. F. W. Schlatter, D. Kries, and C. B. Tkacz (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 65–77.

²⁴ V. Lytvynenko, *Athanasius of Alexandria. Oratio II Contra Arianos: Old Slavonic Version and English Translation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019). For Athanasius: Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 708–21.

²⁵ See also Chapter 3.

The introduction to the Proverbs links the enigma with wisdom and knowledge and this link determined the significance of allegory and enigma in the epistemology of Rus. Hence the problem of allegorical exegesis and biblical enigma is of central importance in Slavic literature, of both Byzantine and Rus origin, as Riccardo Picchio demonstrated in his seminal study on ‘The Function of Biblical Thematic Clues in the Literary Code of “Slavia Orthodoxa”’.²⁶

A patristic example is the anti-Arian *Discourse* of Athanasius of Alexandria which, discussing the question of the conflict between the Christological exegesis of Proverbs 9:1 ‘Wisdom built her house’ and Proverbs 8:22 ‘The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways for his works’, gives a theoretical introduction into the problem of deciphering biblical riddles.²⁷ Athanasius emphasizes that, first of all, it is necessary to enquire who is, in fact, the subject of an enigmatic proverb:

Since these are proverbs, and it is expressed in the way of proverbs, we must not expound them nakedly in their first sense, but we must inquire into the person, and thus piously put the sense on it. For what is said in proverbs, is not said plainly, but is put forth latently, as the Lord Himself has taught us in the Gospel according to John, saying, ‘These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs, but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but openly (John 16:25).’ Therefore, it is necessary to unfold the sense of what is said and to seek it as something hidden and not nakedly to expound as if the meaning were spoken ‘plainly,’ lest by a false interpretation we wander from the truth.²⁸

Eight hundred years later, Kliment (Klim) Smoliatich, the Metropolitan of Kyiv (1147–54), devoted an entire letter to the defence of allegorical exegesis, which he considered an indispensable element of Christian learning.²⁹ Kliment supported his argument with a series of examples from patristic exegesis, which show a large overlap with the texts surrounding the Sophia commentary in the fifteenth-century manuscripts. The Metropolitan of Kyiv began his apology for the allegorical interpretation of the Scripture with an explanation of Proverbs 9:1, well known from Slavonic erotapokritic literature:

²⁶ R. Picchio, ‘The Function of Biblical Thematic Clues in the Literary Code of “Slavia Orthodoxa”’, *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 1 (1977): 1–31.

²⁷ *Orationes contra Arianos III* CPG 2093. Editions of the Slavonic translation: E. Weiher, S. O. Schmidt, and A. I. Škurko, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen des Metropoliten Makarij: Uspenskij Spisok*, vol. I. 1–8 Mai (Freiburg i. Br.: Weiher, 2007), 160–303; Lytvynenko, *Athanasius of Alexandria*.

²⁸ *Oratio 2 contra Arianos*, XIX, 44. English translation by J. H. Newman, in NPNF-2, IV, 372. Slavonic version: Weiher, Schmidt, and Škurko, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen*, vol. I. 1–8 Mai, 224.

²⁹ For Kliment Smoliatich (with bibliography): B. A. Uspenskii, ‘Mitropolit Kliment Smoliatich i ego poslaniiia’, *Slověne*, no. 1 (2017): 171–218; K. V. Vershinin, ‘Poslanie Klimenta Smoliaticha i tolkovnye sborniki’, *Tekstologija i istoriko-literaturnyi protsess* 5 (2017): 16–27; N. V. Ponyrko, ‘Kliment (Klim Smoliatich)’, in *PE*, vol. XXXV, 2014, 486–688; S. Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus’* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), xlv–lxxiv.

Let us reiterate the words of the blessed Solomon who says in his Proverbs . . . : ‘Wisdom built her house and she supported it with seven pillars’; ‘Wisdom’ is the divinity, and the ‘house’ is humanity. For Christ our true God came to dwell—as it were, in a house—in the flesh, which he received from our most pure Lady, Mother of God. And she ‘supported it with seven pillars’, that is, with the seven councils of our holy and God-bearing fathers.³⁰

Here Kliment provides a developed but equally popular version of the exegetical erotapokriseis of Proverbs 9:1 which appears, among others, in the thirteenth-century *Izbornik* and in the Novosibirsk manuscript of the Sophia commentary: ‘Wisdom is Christ, and the house is the Holy Mother of God, the pillars are the seven councils which are the grounds of the temple and the church of Christ.’³¹ In this late version of the exegesis of Proverbs 9:1, the ecclesiological aspects are highlighted. The seven columns of Wisdom’s house are identified with the Seven Ecumenical Councils held between the fourth and eighth centuries (at Nicea/325; Constantinople/381; Ephesus/431; Chalcedon/451; Constantinople/553; Constantinople/680–1; and Nicea/787) which determined the dogmatic teaching of the Church. Kliment’s arguments in favour of allegorical exegesis are supported by the fact that it profoundly inspired liturgical hymnography which constituted another fundamental source of learning in Rus. Correspondingly, the sophiological exegesis of Proverbs 9:1 also frequently appears in liturgical texts, most significantly, in the canon of Holy Thursday (see Chapter 3).³²

Furthermore, there is an interchange between the literary and the pictorial images, as it shows the different visualizations of Proverbs 9 (*‘Wisdom has built her house’*) in the Balkans and in Rus from the late thirteenth century onwards (see Chapter 4). The function of these murals is the same as that of the erotapokriseis and the liturgical texts, but here the singular visual elements are the ‘questions’. What is common between the textual and visual versions is that there is a riddle hidden in the images—this is the didacticism of allegory. Therefore, creators of the commentary on the Russian icon of Wisdom consciously chose the genre of exegetical erotapokriseis which reflects, even in its form, this biblical concept of wisdom and knowledge. This perception of allegory indicates that the obscurity of both the Sophia commentary and the icon was

³⁰ Translation by Simon Franklin (with modifications): Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus’*, 32–3. The Slavonic text: N. V. Ponyrko, *Epistoliarnoe nasledie Drevnei Rusi XI–XIII: issledovaniia, teksty, perevody* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1992), 125.

³¹ Tikh. 397, f. 293v; Watrobska, ‘The *Izbornik* of the XIIIth Century’, 22. Cf. V. V. Itkin, ‘Postateinoe opisanie rukopisnogo sbornika GPNTB SO RAN, sobr. M.N. Tikhomirova, № 397, ser. 15 veka’, accessed 3 June 2020, https://nsu.ru/classics/dionysius/itkin_4sb.htm.

³² Z. Gavrilović, ‘Divine Wisdom as Part of Byzantine Imperial Ideology. Research into the Artistic Interpretation of the Theme in Medieval Serbia: Narthex Programmes of Lesnovo and Sopocani’, *Zograf* 11 (1980): 61–4; Meyendorff, ‘L’iconographie de la Sagesse Divine’, 261; Nikol’skii, *O literaturnykh trudakh*, 139.

deliberate. Thus, the decoding of the commentary on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, ‘understanding its true righteousness’, needs a systematic methodology, where the first task is—according to the Athanasian instruction—to ‘enquire into the person’, that is, answer who is the winged Sophia.

The process of decoding the commentary consists of the following steps: firstly, its questions and answers must be distinguished, then it is necessary to explore the first and the second layers of its quotations (i.e. the biblical and patristic citations), then its context and, finally, the text’s further allusions, which significantly widen the semantics of the commentary.

The questions of the first half of the commentary are about the visual elements of the Sophia icon—the four figures, heaven, the face of fire, the ribbon, the crown, the belt, the sceptre, the wings, the garment, the scroll, the throne, and the stone below the throne—whereas those in the second half of the commentary



Fig. 1.2. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* framed with the text of the commentary, church banner from Novgorod, the Church of St Niketas, 1550s–1560s.

Credit: State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

(in *The Fountain of Wisdom*) concern the details of a royal-monastic female garment. The answers consist of a few catchwords: they are either quotations from the Bible, short explanations, or sometimes literary images.

The second step is the exploration of the biblical quotations. From this perspective, the citations from the Scripture 'in structurally marked places, usually at the beginning of the exposition' are particularly relevant which Picchio termed as 'biblical thematic clues'. The 'biblical thematic clue' helps 'to unveil the hidden meaning' of the texts in 'the historical and the fictional writing of Orthodox Slavdom'.³³ It is striking that in the Sophia commentary there are no quotations from Proverbs, whatever the sophiological subject may suggest. *The Fountain of Wisdom* starts with the determinative 'this' (ε) which refers to a preceding sentence or passage. In the context of the Sophia commentary, it acts as a 'biblical thematic clue' and reveals who the winged Sophia is. Here the quotations are from the Song of Songs: 'And this richness is an endless and inexhaustible treasury, which is hidden in the hiding of the heart: *fountain sealed up, garden enclosed* (Song 4:12), *heap of wheat* (Song 7:3) of the Solomonian bride, *the fountain of wisdom* (Eccl 1:5).' From this sentence, it is evident that the winged figure commented on in the first part of the commentary is the 'Solomonian bride'. Accordingly, *The Fountain of Wisdom* is a description of the bride of the Song of Songs with an allegorical explanation of her richly decorated vestments.

The allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs, which goes back to Origen (†254), was widely known in Rus.³⁴ It is also present in all four manuscripts containing the first and second redactions of the Sophia commentary.³⁵ The basis of this allegorical exegesis, as Origen claims in his commentary on the Song of Songs is the twofold allegorical interpretation of the bride and the bridegroom: 'the appellations of Bride and Bridegroom denote either the Church in her relation to Christ, or the soul in her union with the Word of God.'³⁶ This twofold interpretation of the bride is at the core of the Russian commentary on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon: the winged figure in her bridal-royal-hierarchal gown is the soul, cleansed from all sins and fornication, full of divine wisdom, and also the redeemed Church, which gives the potential for deification to its members, and whose purity/virginity and truth/wisdom is the true faith, Orthodoxy. Thus, Sophia is the personification of the Orthodox Church.

³³ Picchio, 'The Function of Biblical Thematic Clues', 6.

³⁴ For Origen: Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 536–74. For a survey of late antique and early medieval interpretations of the Song of Songs: Kannengiesser, 303–4, 310; F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien: Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis um 1200* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1958). For the Slavic translations of the commentaries on the Song of Songs: M. Dimitrova, *Tülkuvaniia na Pesen na Pesnite v rukopis 2/24 ot Rilskata sveta obitel* (Sofia: Heron Press, 2012); A. A. Alekseev, *Pesn' pesnei v drevnei slaviano-russkoi pis'mennosti* (St Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2002).

³⁵ The Solovki manuscript contains the full Slavonic translation of *Catena trium Patrum* (CPG C81), published by Alekseev using also this manuscript (ff. 193r–257r): Alekseev, *Pesn' pesnei*, 63–122.

³⁶ Origen, *In Canticum Canticoorum*, I,1 (CPG 1433). Translation by R. P. Lawson: Origen, *The Song of Songs. Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R. P. Lawson (Westminster Md: Newman Press, 1957), 58.

This ecclesiological interpretation of both the commentary and the icon, which goes against the accepted Trinitarian explanation of the Sophia iconography, is supported by many hidden quotations and allusions in the text. These quotations are citations from homilies, ascetical writings, liturgical texts, and liturgical commentaries which will be discussed in the next chapter. The most obvious proofs of this ecclesiological interpretation, however, are the biblical quotations in the first part of the commentary. The first sentence is the ultimate ‘biblical thematic clue’ which helps to decipher its hidden message. ‘The purity of ineffable virginity, the truth of humble wisdom has Christ above the head’ is a paraphrase of the ecclesiological verse of the *Epistle to the Ephesians* (5:23; cf. 1:22–3): ‘Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body.’³⁷ Likewise, the last sentence of the first part (which is the end of the later redactions of the commentary) makes it unequivocal that Sophia is the personification of the church: ‘Her legs are on rock—upon this rock I will build my church (Matt 16:19).’³⁸

Before continuing to decode the commentary by exploring its other textual quotations, it is necessary to summarize the foregoing observations about the genre of commentaries on icons. The most important result of this investigation is that the literary technique of erotapokriseis was used to explain Russian allegorical icons and this is why the description of the visual is missing from these texts. Instead of a rhetorical description, it is enigma that connects the icon with its commentary. The iconographic details occur as questions, while the short answers are excerpts from biblical, liturgical, exegetical, or other patristic texts, which open new interpretative and associative layers for the icon. The visual elements are usually not connected with each other by a common narrative: their function is to start a chain of recollection. The commentary on the Sophia icon documents a very close link between text and image. The allegorism of icon-painting raised the demand for literary commentary, but the form of the commentary might have had a strong impact on the visual. In fact, it is difficult to decide which came first, the chicken or the egg—the icon or its commentary. This strong link is shown by some Sophia images in which the text of the commentary appears as an inscription (Cat. 12 and 22; Figs 1.2, 5.1). Among these, the local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral with its ten-line inscription, albeit unexplored, is definitely the most significant (Cat. 3; Fig. 0.1).

³⁷ For this first sentence of the commentary, see also Chapter 3.

³⁸ In the third redaction of the commentary, new introductory words were added to the text which claims that Sophia is the Church of God and thus makes explicit that which was only implied in the first redaction: ‘the Church of God is Sophia, the most pure Virgin Mother of God, that is virginal soul.’ For a detailed analysis of these words, see Chapter 12.

2

The Winged Bride

Quotations in the Sophia Commentary

This section of the analysis of the Novgorod Sophia commentary is based on the hidden quotations in the text. Following Albert Ammann's influential studies written in the 1930s, there is agreement amongst scholars that the winged figure on the icon is the hypostatic image of Christ as a Sophia Angel.¹ Accordingly, the Trinitarian explanation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has been widely accepted: it is an image of the Great Counsel of the Holy Trinity with a triple representation of Christ. As we have seen, the critical analysis of the biblical quotations of the commentary disputes this Trinitarian interpretation, suggesting an ecclesiological symbolism. The non-biblical citations which will now be discussed provide further support for this claim.

The 'God-seeing bird'—Ephrem the Syrian: *Homily on the Beauteous Joseph*

The starting point for the study of the hidden quotations is a comparison of the two earliest surviving Russian commentaries on icons: the commentary on the Sophia icon, and Iosif Volotskii's explanation of the image of the Holy Trinity in the form of three angels hosted by Abraham (Gen 18; Figs 8.4, 11.6, 12.3). In his *Enlightener*, Iosif defended the angelic representations of God by relying on, amongst other texts, the biblical prophecy of Isaiah about Christ as an Angel of Great Counsel (Isa 9:5). For him, the angelic appearance of the Holy Trinity to Abraham was the image of its Great Counsel: 'First, God revealed to him (Abraham) the mystery of the Holy Trinity, then the Holy Trinity had a meal in his home, in order to give him a blessed promise about the birth of Isaac—a child who prefigured the Saviour's birth without seed.'² Accordingly, Iosif commented on the angelic image of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, including Christ, the Angel of the Great Counsel.

There are four common visual elements, which are explained by both commentaries: the sceptre, the crown, the throne, and the wings. Of these four,

¹ See Introduction.

² N. A. Kazakova and Ia. S. Lur'e, *Antifeodal'nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi XIV-nachala XVI veka* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk, 1955), 363.

however, there is only one detail, the sceptre, which has the same meaning in both images by referring to regal dignity. Whilst the throne and the crown in Iosif's commentary reinforce the imperial power of the Triune God, in the Sophia commentary the crown symbolizes the reign of humility over passions and the throne denotes the repose of the world to come.

The most telling difference, however, can be found in the explanation of the wings—the ultimate symbols of an angel. Iosif cited the Slavonic *Corpus Dionysiacum* in his explanation of the wings: 'They have wings, in order to **display their upward thrust, self-movement, untrammelled uplifting and their being in no respect earthly**.'³ Following from Dionysius's angel-commentaries in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, Iosif's commentary states that the wings symbolize the Trinity's heavenly origin, freedom, ascension, and their independence from 'all earthly longing'. The wings in the Novgorod Sophia commentary, however, denote something quite different: 'She has fiery wings—high soaring prophecy and quick mind; this God-seeing bird, loving wisdom, flies higher as soon as it sees the hunter. Thus, those who love virginity are hard to catch by the hunter devil.' In this explanation, there is no trace of the fact that Sophia, similarly to the Trinity, 'is in no respect earthly' which is a Divine attribute. In contrast, Sophia flies higher in order not to be caught by the hunter devil. The Angel of the Great Counsel could never be chased by a hunter. Sophia is an earthly being, and what is most surprising, she is not even an angel, but a bird: she is 'a God-seeing bird'.

According to the rules of the erotapokriseis, this explanatory 'answer' of the commentary is a reference to a text, as it was the case in Iosif Volotskii's explanation; but here the cited passage is not from the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, but from another authentic corpus, the Slavonic *Paraenesis*—a collection of sermons by Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373) translated in tenth-century Bulgaria.⁴ The quotation comes from the *Homily on the Beauteous Joseph*, from the passage narrating the story of Joseph's temptation by Potiphar's wife (Gen 39).⁵ The sermon provides a detailed account of the manifold attempts by the wife of

³ Kriza, *A középkori orosz képvédő irodalom I.*, 291. Quotations are from *The Celestial Hierarchy* ('For wings signify the uplifting swiftness, the climb to heaven; the ever-upward journey whose constantly **upward thrust** rises above all earthly longing. The lightness of wings symbolizes the freedom from all worldly attraction, their pure and **untrammelled uplifting** towards the heights.') and from the scholion to *The Celestial Hierarchy* ('Angels have bare feet, in order to **display their self-movement**, spreading on high towards God and **their being in no respect earthly**'). VMCh, vol. IV: 1–3 October (1870), 367–68. English translation: Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. P. Rorem and C. Luibhéid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 186. Quotations are highlighted.

⁴ I. Ågren, *Paraenesis Efrema Sirina: K istorii slavianskogo perevoda* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1989), 73–4; F. J. Thomson, 'The Old Bulgarian Translation of the Homilies of Ephraim Syrus', *Palaeobulgarica* 9 (1985): 124. For further bibliography: O. F. Zholobov, 'Korpus drevnerusskikh spiskov Paraenesis Efrema Sirina. III, 1', *Russian Linguistics* 35, no. 3 (2011): 361–80.

⁵ *Sermo in pulcherrimum Ioseph*, CPG 3938; BHG 2200. Slavic editions: G. Bojkovsky and R. Aitzetmüller, *Paraenesis: die albulgarische Übersetzung von Werken Ephraims des Syrers*, vol. IV (Freiburg im Breisgau: Weiher, 1988), 282–353; Efrema Sirin, *Poucheniia* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1647), ff. 276r–295r.

the Egyptian officer, the ‘shameless asp’, to seduce the beautiful young Joseph, ‘the source of chastity’. In her last effort, she tore off Joseph’s clothes, but he escaped naked from the arms of the harlot. Describing this escape, Ephrem uses the metaphor of an eagle: ‘Joseph, seeing the great shamelessness of this woman, suddenly ran out of the door, left his clothes in her hands and tore up the nets of the devil. Just as that other eagle which flies higher as soon as it sees the hunter, Joseph escaped from the nets, so as not to die by deed and word.’⁶

Ephrem’s eagle-metaphor is apparently not unconnected with the image of the escaping Apocalyptic woman who ‘was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness . . . from the face of the serpent’ (Rev 12:14). The first and third recensions of the commentary mention the eagle, whereas the second one does not posit that Sophia would be an eagle, it only claims that she is a ‘God-seeing bird’. She is ‘God-seeing’, just like Joseph who ‘in his gaze and words reached the highest level of chastity and who incessantly had before his eyes his holy God, all-seeing God of fathers, releasing him from the grave of death’.⁷

The authority of Ephrem’s homily is shown by the fact that it was the liturgical reading for Holy Monday, commemorating the beautiful and wise Joseph.⁸ The liturgical texts of the first day of Holy Week draw a parallel between the suffering Christ and Joseph, who, after being thrown into a cistern and imprisoned, became the lord of Egypt. Joseph appears here as a personification of chastity and a ‘true figure of Christ’ who ‘guarded the faith with wisdom’.⁹ These are also the leitmotifs of Ephrem’s sermon analysed by Branislav Todić as an overlooked source of the Joseph-cycles in Byzantine art.¹⁰ Todić, on the basis of the sermon’s paralleling of Christ and Joseph, emphasized the Christological message of the painted Joseph-cycles in the narthex of the Sopoćani church (1263–8) and that of the Sophia Church in Ohrid (1355). The citation of the Joseph-homily in the Russian Sophia commentary, however, indicates that the Joseph-cycles were integral parts of the Wisdom concepts of the narthex programmes of these churches indeed, as Zaga Gavrilović had pointed out several years earlier.¹¹ The Joseph-homily, therefore, not only provides a clue to the bird-image of the Sophia

⁶ Efre Sirin, *Poucheniiia*, f. 285v. Highlighted words are quoted by the Sophia commentary.

⁷ Efre Sirin, f. 283v.

⁸ The text was also read on Holy Tuesday and Wednesday, as well as before on the Sunday before Christmas (the Sunday of Forefathers): A. Miltenova, *South Slavonic Apocryphal Collections* (Sofia: Boyan Penev izdatelski tsentur, 2018), 212–21; T. V. Čertorickaja, *Vorläufiger Katalog kirchenslavischer Homilien des beweglichen Jahreszyklus: Aus Handschriften des 11.–16. Jahrhunderts vorwiegend ostslavischer Provenienz* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 255–81, 758. For the Slavic reception of the Joseph homily see also: L. Jovanović, ‘Івсифъ Прѣкрасни: The Post-Biblical Development of the Image of Joseph, Son of Jacob, in the Slavonic Tradition’, *Scripta & E-Scripta*, no. 19 (2019): 129–43; E. G. Vodolazkin, ‘Slovo Efrema Sirina ob Iosife Prekrasnom v drevnerusskikh paleinykh tekstakh’, *Hyperboreus* 16–17 (2010–2011): 444–52.

⁹ Palm Sunday, Compline, Canticles 8 and 9, cf. Mother Mary and Archimandrite K. Ware, trans., *The Lenten Triodion* (London: Faber, 1978), 508–9.

¹⁰ B. Todić, ‘A Note on the Beautiful Joseph in Late Byzantine Painting’, *DChAE* 18 (1995): 91.

¹¹ Gavrilović, ‘Divine Wisdom’, 54–60.

commentary but also sheds light on the conceptual relationship between the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and the painted decorations of late Byzantine churches in the Balkans.

The Ephremean bird-metaphor has a wider ecclesiological context. To fully understand its symbolism, we must also look to include in this investigation a further, anonymous sermon, very popular in both the Byzantine East and the Latin West but overlooked by modern scholars. In Slavonic literature, this homily is attributed to John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), being part of the miscellany called *Zlatostrui* (*Chrysorrhoeas*, collection of John Chrysostom's sermons). The title of the sermon is *Homily on the turtledove and the church*.¹²

The text begins with an image of the desert-lover turtledove, who captivates her partner by singing and who remains faithful to her partner even after his death. She builds her nest hidden in the branches of trees where she brings up her fledglings. This image is accompanied by a commentary:

Listen, women, such a chastity the birds have! Behold the image of the turtledove and imitate her chastity in love of purity! . . . Such is the holy and honourable church: when her spouse, Christ was crucified on the cross and ascended to heavens she did not take another husband, she loves only him, she waits only for him and she wants to die with his memory . . . David sings: 'Even the sparrow found a house for herself, and the turtledove a nest for herself, where she will lay her young' (Ps 83:4). Who is the bird he is speaking about? Is it not the man: 'Our soul was delivered like a sparrow from the snare of the hunters' (Ps 123:7)? . . . [David] compares the holy Church to the turtledove with several gifts of wisdom (cf. Isa 11:2). That the Church is decorated by different ways you can hear from David saying: 'The queen stood at your right hand in apparel interwoven with gold' (Ps 44:10). 'Even the sparrow found a house for herself, and the turtledove a nest for herself, where she will lay her young,' that is under the solid branches of the holy cross, feeding the newly sanctified children. Of this turtledove the Song of Songs makes mention: 'The voice of the dove is heard in our land' (Song 2:12). Listen to the voice of this turtledove, what does she sing to you: 'I am black and beautiful' (Song 1:5)—black because of the old sin, beautiful because of the quick repentance.¹³

In his allegorical sermon, the anonymous author links the bird metaphor of Psalm 83 with the bride allegory of the Song of Songs. The bird who found her house is the man, the human soul, whereas the turtledove, who lays her young in the nest,

¹² *De torture seu de ecclesia sermo* CPG 4547. Edition of the Greek text with Latin translation: PG 55: 599–602. I am grateful to Péter Tóth for bringing this text to my attention. For the Slavonic text: Ia. Miltenov, *Zlatostrui: starobŭlgarski khomiletichen svod, sŭzdaten po initsiiativa na bulgarskiiia tsar Simeon* (Sofia: Avalon, 2013), 109, 202. Edition: VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1743–50.

¹³ VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1743–5.

is the Church. The turtledove is chaste and faithful to his spouse, i.e. to Christ and she has ‘several gifts of wisdom’, the sign of which is her lavishly decorated clothing ‘interwoven with gold’: the vestments of the bride, the queen who stood at the right of her bridegroom, the ‘anointed’ King. The ecclesiological interpretation of Psalm 44 is of crucial importance in the symbolism of the Novgorod Sophia icon; accordingly, the winged Sophia also wears ‘apparel interwoven with gold’. The bird metaphor, therefore, is transformed into a bridal allegory in the sermon, where the voice of the turtledove becomes the voice of the bride of the Song of Songs: ‘I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem.’

The author of the *Sermon on the turtledove* builds his whole text on the twofold allegorical interpretation of the bride of the Song of Songs, inherited from Origen, as either an allegory of the soul or that of the Church. The images of bird-soul and turtledove-church are united in the figure of the bride, who can be identified with the winged figure depicted in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. Furthermore, the first and third recensions of the commentary specify that the wings belong to an eagle, thus referring to the figure of the escaping apocalyptic woman with eagle wings which has an apparent ecclesiological symbolism. This eschatological image gained a special importance in sixteenth-century Muscovite ecclesiology: the texts, in which the so-called ‘Third Rome’ theory was formulated, emphasize that the eagle wings led the woman, i.e. the Church, to the last shelter, Moscow.¹⁴

In terms of iconography, it is of great significance that the bird allegory has been extended to the single members of the Church. Just as Ephrem compares Joseph, the Old Testament prefiguration of Christ, with an eagle, so too this *Sermon* utilizes the words of the Book of Jeremiah in order to apply the bird-imagery to the New Testament saints: ‘Jeremiah says: “even the stork in the sky knows her appointed time, as do the turtledove and swallow of the field” (Jer 8:7). The turtledove denotes the Holy Church, the swallow is John, who loves the desert-life, and the stork is the eloquent Paul, the siren of the Church.’¹⁵

This comparison of John the Baptist with a swallow sheds new light on the meaning of the representations of the winged Forerunner. The first examples of these unusual images survive from the thirteenth-century Balkans, subsequently they became exceptionally popular in Post-Byzantine painting and, from the second half of the sixteenth century, the winged John appeared also in *Novgorod*

¹⁴ M. B. Pliukhanova, ‘Propoved’ na Torzhestvo Pravoslavia i sochinenie “Ob obidakh tserkvi”: k voprosu ob ekkleziologicheskikh osnovakh ucheniia o Tret’em Rime’, in *Russkaia agiografiia : issledovaniia, publikatsii, polemika*, ed. T. R. Rudi and S. A. Semiachko, vol. II (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2011), 562–4; N. V. Sinityna, *Tretii Rim: Istoki i evoliutsiia russkoi srednevekovoi kontseptsii (XV–XVI vv.)* (Moscow: Indrik, 1998), 246–8; B. A. Uspenskii, ‘Vospriiatie istorii v Drevnei Rusi i doktrina “Moskva—Tretii Rim”’, in *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. I: Semiotika istorii (Moscow: Shkola ‘Iazyki russkoi kul’tury’, 1994), 95–6. See also Chapter 12.

¹⁵ VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1743–4.

Sophia iconography (Cat. 24, 25, 26, 29, 30).¹⁶ Together with the hymnography of John the Baptist, adopting the swallow/turtledove-imagery, this passage indicates that John's wings are not exclusively angelic wings, a reference to his angel-messenger mission to 'prepare the way' of Christ (Matt 11:10, etc.), but also those of a bird, endowing the iconography of John the Baptist with an explicit ecclesiological message.¹⁷ John the Baptist, in accordance with the hymnography, features simultaneously as an 'earthly angel' and a bird 'who loves the wilderness' and whose voice announces the heavenly spring, Christ's coming for the turtledove-Church 'preaching repentance'.¹⁸

The song of the turtledove-bride about her blackness opens a new section in the *Sermon on the turtledove*, one based on a nuptial allegorism which extends the parallel between the Church and the soul. For the soul, the blackness means sin. In terms of the Church, the words 'I am black and beautiful' signify 'the Church of the pagan nations'. The remedies for the sinful, dark soul are repentance, baptism, good deeds, and asceticism, which make her face shiny, attracting the bridegroom, the 'Sun of the Truth', Christ. She will be pierced by God's love, becoming 'the soul of saints' saying: 'I am wounded with love' (Song 2:5). Similarly, the Church of pagan nations, wounded by love, eagerly awaits her bridegroom, as promised by the prophets. Finally, John the Baptist appears, the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29) who introduces the bridegroom to the bride: 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). What follows is the spiritual wedding described with the words of Psalm 44: 'Hear, O Daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and the house of your father, because the king desired your beauty' (Ps 44:11). The homily ends with the words

¹⁶ For a bibliography of the winged John the Baptist (the earliest surviving examples are in Arilje/1296–97/, in Marko's Monastery/1376–77/and in the *Serbian Psalter*/ca. 1370–90/): M. A. Makhan'ko, *Pochitanie i sobiranje drevnikh ikon v istorii i kul'ture Moskovskoi Rusi XVI veka* (Moscow: BuksMArt, 2015), 196–206; D. Vojvodić, *Zidno slikarstvo crkve svetog Ahilija u Arilju* (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 2005), 163; A. Lymberopoulou, 'A Winged Saint John the Baptist in the British Museum', *Apollo* 158, no. November (2003): 19–24; J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'Une icône d'Angelos au Musée de Malines et l'iconographie du saint Jean-Baptiste ailé', *Bulletin de Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 48 (1976): 121–44.

¹⁷ In this aspect, especially important are the liturgical texts for Tuesday (the day of John the Baptist) of the liturgical book called *Oktoichos*, providing numerous examples of swallow/turtledove-imagery. For both the angelic and bird epithets of John in the hymnography: Ieromoakh Kiprian (Kern), *Kriny molitvennye: Sbornik statei po liturgicheskomu bogosloviiu* (Belgrade: Izd. Bratstva Prep. Serafima, 1928), chap. 6. 'Pustyneliubnaia gorlitsa (vtornik)'.

¹⁸ The first extant winged John the Baptist in Arilje has a scroll with a passage from the sticheron of Beheading of John the Baptist (29 August): 'What shall we call you? A Prophet, an angel, an apostle, or a martyr? An earthly angel, because you lived as a bodiless being.' See Vojvodić, *Zidno slikarstvo crkve svetog Ahilija u Arilju*, 163; M. Tatić-Đurić, 'Ikona Jovana Krilatog iz Dečana', *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja* 7 (1973): 43. The same sticheron appears in the seventeenth-century icon of the Krušedol Monastery. For the inscriptions on the scroll of the winged John the Baptist: Lymberopoulou, 'A Winged Saint John the Baptist in the British Museum', 19; Tatić-Đurić, 'Ikona Jovana Krilatog iz Dečana'.

The other quotation is from the *Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete*: 'The dove who loved the wilderness, the lamp of Christ, the voice of one crying aloud, was heard preaching repentance.' Mary and K. Ware, *The Lenten Triodion*, 227.

of the Apostle Paul, comparing the relationship between the Church and Christ with that of spouses: ‘For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Eph 5:31–2). This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church’.

The commentary on the *Novgorod Sophia* begins with a paraphrase of the same fifth ecclesiological chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians (‘Christ is head of the church’, Eph 5:23, see Chapter 1), which is the foundation of the allegory of the *Sermon on the Turtledove* depicting the faithful, chaste bird loving her spouse. This complex nuptial symbolism of the Letter to the Ephesians is also a leitmotif of the whole commentary, which consciously plays with the dual interpretation of the bride as both the human soul and the Church. This multilevel symbolism was also utilized by Ephrem the Syrian, whose eagle comparison, with its reference to Revelation 12:14, has also an ecclesiological message: the figure of the tempted Joseph embodying a combination of chastity and wisdom is also the symbol of the Church, when harassed by the devil. Correspondingly, the explanations of the singular visual elements in the commentary often bear a twofold meaning: both anthropological and ecclesiological.

‘The fire is Divinity’—Slavonic Liturgical Commentaries

This multilevel symbolism is enhanced by quotations from liturgical texts and, even more importantly, from medieval Slavonic liturgical commentaries.¹⁹ These commentaries constitute a complex network of texts in Slavonic literature, combining and interpolating each other. They were collected into a special Rus compilation called *Tolkovaia sluzhba* (*Liturgical commentary*) probably at the turn of the fourteenth century, although the earliest extant manuscripts of this composite text are only from the fifteenth century.²⁰ Interestingly, two of these, Tikh. 397 and TSL 122 are also the first manuscripts of the *Sophia* commentary.²¹ The brief explanations in the *Tolkovaia sluzhba* on different liturgies and rites, liturgical vestments and vessels, and the structure of the church itself, often formulated as questions and answers, reflect the questions and responses in the *Sophia* commentary. A common feature shared by both the liturgical and the icon commentaries is that the object of the allegorical explanation is not a text, but a

¹⁹ T. I. Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia na liturgiui v rukopisnoi traditsii XII–XVI vv.: Issledovanie i teksty* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2012).

²⁰ Afanas’eva, 139–91.

²¹ Tikh. 397, ff. 73r–88v; TSL 122, ff. 108v–128r. The Solovki manuscript (Sol. 807, ff. 395–7) also preserves a liturgical commentary, *Slovo Sv. Grigoriia o liturgii*, cf. Afanas’eva, 63–8; N. F. Krasnosel’tsev, ‘“Tolkovaia sluzhba” i drugie sochineniia, otnosiashchiesia k ob’iasneniiu bogoslužheniia v Drevnei Rusi do XVIII veka: Bibliograficheskii obzor’, *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik*, no. 2 (1878): 11–19.

visual object or action. In this respect, erotapokritic liturgical commentaries must be considered the closest antecedents of icon commentaries. Unsurprisingly, there are many textual links between the different liturgical commentaries and the Sophia commentary.

At the core of all these texts is the liturgical commentary entitled *Ecclesiastical history*, traditionally attributed to Patriarch Germanos I (ca. 634–733 or 740).²² The earliest Slavonic translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* goes back as far as to the ninth century and its earliest surviving manuscripts to the twelfth century.²³ The introduction to this text begins with a definition of the Church that will be frequently referenced during the analysis of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon:

The Church is the temple of God, a holy place, a house of prayer, the assembly of the people, the body of Christ. It is called the bride. It is cleansed by the water of His baptism, sprinkled by His blood, clothed in bridal garments, and sealed with the ointment of the Holy Spirit, according to the prophetic saying: ‘Your name is oil poured out’ (Song 1:3) and ‘We run after the fragrance of your myrrh’ (Song 1:4), which is ‘Like fragrant oil running down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron’ (Ps 132:2).²⁴

According to this definition, the Church has three meanings: firstly, the constructed church; secondly, the assembly of people and finally, the body of Christ, in accordance with the Pauline interpretation: ‘Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body’ (Eph 5:23). At the same time, the bride clad in bridal garments is another symbol of the Church. In concordance with the definition of the *Ecclesiastical History*, the Sophia commentary utilizes both the clothing metaphors associated with the vestments of the clergy in the liturgical commentaries and the explanations relating to the constructed church: its services, architecture, and equipment.

The Sophia commentary makes it clear that Wisdom wears priestly and regal garments: ‘A belt is tied around her loins—this is a figure of priesthood.’ Accordingly, *The Fountain of Wisdom* in Section III, by explaining the vestments of Sophia, echoes the explanations of the monastic habit in Germanos’s liturgical commentary, based on the warrior image of the Letter to Ephesians (6:13–17). For

²² *Historia mystica ecclesiae catholicae*, CPG 8023; PG 98, cols. 384–453. English translation: Germanos of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, ed. P. Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

²³ For the textual history of the Slavonic translation: Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 14–58; F. J. Thomson, ‘Constantine of Preslav and the Old Bulgarian Translation of the “Historia Ecclesiastica et Mystica Contemplatio” Attributed to Patriarch Germanos I of Constantinople’, *Palaeobulgarica* 10 (1988): 41–8; K. Kuev, *Ivan Aleksandroviat sbornik ot 1348g.* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bŭlgarskata akademiia na naukite, 1981), 326–43. Critical edition of the Slavonic *Ecclesiastical History* (*Skazanie tserkovnoe*): Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 228–75.

²⁴ Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 228–9. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanos of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 57.

example, in both commentaries the sandals denote the life according to the Gospel, or the cap together with tonsure symbolize suffering. The explanation of hierarchical vestments, which denote Christ's body, sheds light on the Christological significance of the clothing metaphor: 'Then the bishop, by his stole, manifests the red and bloody stole of the flesh of Christ. The immaterial One and God wore this stole, as porphyry decorated by the undefiled blood of the virgin Theotokos. The good shepherd took the lost sheep upon his shoulders.'²⁵ The hierarch puts on his stole, the so-called *omophorion*, over his shoulders, just as Christ assumed the humanity to save the lost sheep, the fallen mankind.

The humanity of Christ is inseparable from his divinity, as symbolized by the censer, the symbolical interpretation of which is cited in the Sophia commentary, explaining the fiery red face of Sophia:

The censer demonstrates the incarnation (humanity) of Christ, and **the fire is divinity**. The sweet-smelling smoke reveals the fragrance of the Holy Spirit which precedes. For the censer denotes sweet joy. Again, the interior of the censer is understood as the womb of the Virgin who bore the divine fiery coal, Christ, in whom 'the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' (Col 2:9) ...²⁶

Sophia's 'virginal face of fire' is the incandescent coal, burning with the fire of deity, an image of the incarnated Christ in the womb of the Theotokos.²⁷ The Eucharistic symbolism of this imagery is evident: in the vision of Isaiah (Isa 6:6–7) a seraph touched the prophet's mouth with a live coal, a prefiguration of the Eucharist, the deified body of Christ. The words of the seraph are a communion formula of the Byzantine Liturgy; its special paraphrase was recited by the priests in their medieval Slavonic communion prayer: 'Behold, this living coal has touched my lips, taking away my iniquity, and purging my sins.'²⁸ Thus, the Sophia commentary's explanation of the Wisdom's red face—'the fire is divinity, which consumes corruptible passions and illuminates the pure soul'—sheds light on a further, Eucharistic aspect of the ecclesiological symbolism of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon (see Table 2). The winged figure, the 'Solomonian bride' is the redeemed, deified humanity, the Church and the Body of Christ which is the 'noetic, fiery coal', the Eucharist. Accordingly, Sophia's face is red to visualize

²⁵ Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie Tolkovaniia*, 245–6. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 75. For the symbolical interpretations of episcopal vestments in Byzantine liturgical commentaries: W. T. Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103–14.

²⁶ Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie Tolkovaniia*, 251–2. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 79–81. Highlighted words are quoted in the Sophia commentary.

²⁷ See Chapter 6.

²⁸ M. Zheltov, 'Chin Bozhestvennoi liturgii v drevneishikh (XI–XIV vv.) slavianskikh sluzhebni-kakh', *Bogoslovskie trudy* 41 (2007): 315, 332. Quotation from the prayer Множество ради грѣховъ моихъ, cf. T. I. Afanas'eva, *Liturgii Ioanna Zlatousta i Vasilia Velikogo v slavianskoi traditsii: (po sluzhebnikam XI–XV vv.)* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2015), 109–21.

the fire of the Eucharist. The fiery creatures, such as the sun and its personification, or the seraphim and cherubim, are sometimes represented in red or with red face in both Byzantium and Rus.²⁹

This Eucharistic meaning is reinforced by further references to the Divine Liturgy. The central element of the Byzantine Liturgy is the *Elevation (Anaphora)* when the bread and wine are consecrated. Once the priest or bishop has cited Christ's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and lifted up the gifts of bread and wine from the altar to God the Father, he invokes the Holy Spirit in the *Epiclesis*, asking that it will be sent down on the gifts and consecrate them. The *Epiclesis* is continued by the intercession prayer, which starts as follows:

Moreover we offer unto thee this reasonable service for them that have gone to their rest in faith: For our forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics; and for every righteous spirit in faith made perfect. More especially our most holy and undefiled, most blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever-Virgin.³⁰

The last sentence commemorating the Theotokos, the so-called *Theotokos ekphonesis*, is followed by commemorations of John the Baptist, apostles, and all saints. These words constitute the incipit of the *Diptychs*, the liturgical commemorations of the dead and living. Having commemorated the bishops and archpriests of the given church, the intercession prayer of the Anaphora is closed by the exclamation: 'for each and all'.

It is this moment in the Liturgy, the *Epiclesis*, and the intercession prayer, as explained in the *Tolkovaia sluzhba*, that inspired the Sophia icon's commentary. Significantly, these parts of the *Tolkovaia sluzhba* are the latest additions to the

²⁹ See the red cherub in the scene of *Expulsion from Paradise*, for example in Vat.gr.747, f. 24v (eleventh century); the representations of sun in the same manuscript (16v, 17r, etc.), or in the illustrations of Psalms 49:1 and 135:8 among others in the *Kyiv Psalter* from 1397 (RNB, OLDP, F 6., 188r); as well as the moon in the twelfth-century *Adoration of the cross* icon from Novgorod (GTG, no. 14245). In some Marian images, e.g. the *Znamenie* and *Dormition*, the seraph(s) are also frequently represented in vivid red (e.g. the fifteenth-century Tver *Znamenie* icon/GTG, no. 25541/and the fourteenth-century *Dormition* icon/GTG, no. 14244/).

³⁰ *The Orthodox Liturgy: Being The Divine Liturgies of S John Chrysostom and S Basil The Great and The Divine Office of the Presanctified Gifts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 77. For the Slavonic translation: Afanas'eva, *Liturgii Ioanna Zlatousta i Vasiliia Velikogo*, 312. For the intercession prayer of the Anaphora: R. F. Taft, 'Praying to or for the Saints? A Note on the Sanctoral Intercessions Commemorations in the Anaphora: History and Theology', in *Ab oriente et occidente (Mt 8, 11): Kirche aus Ost und West. Gedenkschrift für Wilhem Nyssen*, ed. M. Schneider and W. Berschin (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1996), 439–55; G. Winkler, 'Die Interzessionen der Chrysostomusanaphora in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 36 (1970): 301–36 and 37 (1971): 333–83; H. Engberding, 'Das Anaphorische Fürbittgebet der byzantinischen Chrysostomusliturgie, I', *Oriens Christianus* 45 (1961): 20–9 and 46 (1962): 33–60; Archimandrite Kiprian (Kern), *Evkharistiia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1947).



Fig. 2.1. Blessing John the Baptist flanked by two deacons, fresco in the diakonikon, Church of St Panteleimon, Nerezi, ca. 1164.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

text: they were taken from the so-called *Hermeneia* which describes and explains the episcopal liturgy.³¹

Firstly, the Slavonic liturgical commentary compares the right hand of the archpriest which makes a sign of cross over the gifts three times with that of the Forerunner, baptizing Christ.³² This comparison between the Forerunner and the officiating bishop clearly influenced Byzantine iconography. For example, as we shall see, in the late twelfth-century fresco decoration of the St Panteleimon church in Nerezi, John the Baptist appears in the altar space, with blessing right hand, flanked by deacons (Fig. 2.1).³³ Likewise, this idea has a relevance for the

³¹ For the *Hermeneia* which possibly goes back to an unknown twelfth-century original and was translated into Slavonic in Rus at the turn of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries: Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie Tolkovaniia*, 154–91; T. I. Afanas’eva, ‘Erminiia arkhieieiskoi liturgii v sostave “Tolkovoi sluzhby”: Lokalizatsiia i datirovka perevoda’, *Drevniia Rus’: Voprosy Medievistiki* 47 (2012): 103–7.

³² Се во иже прекрестити сѣль три крѣта сѣда дары, се естъ ѡко възложи ѿвѣннѣ рѣку на крѣстившаго г҃а. Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 388.

³³ I. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi: Architecture, Programme, Patronage* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000), 45–6. See also Chapter 11.

Novgorod Sophia iconography. In some versions, the Wisdom images show John the Baptist's blessing right hand raised towards Sophia, thus creating an apparent liturgical reference (Figs 0.4, 11.5, 11.6, 12.5, 12.6; see also Chapter 11 and the Catalogue in the Appendix).

Further, regarding the Theotokos ekphonesis, the *Hermeneia* mentions the Nestorian heresy and its opponent, Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 376–444) who defended the Theotokos, God-bearer title of Mary at the Council of Ephesus (431). Immediately following this, the commentary explains the exclamation: 'for each and all':

What the deacon exclaims is the teaching about the virginal life. **Those who love virginity will be similar to the Mother of God.** The subdeacons bear the image of virginity when they sing 'for each and all,' as by this chant they are the imitators of virginal life. As with this chant, they . . . burn up the heart of those who want to be the imitators of their virginal life and they exclaim for the whole world: 'Come, let us go in the house of the Lord, that is in the Heavenly Jerusalem, being imitators of the Mother of God, as she gave birth to the incorruptible Word of our God, who invited us to **participate in the great light.**'³⁴

The subdeacons belong to the ranks of the minor clergy and they have particular tasks during hierarchical services. Once they have been ordained, i.e. e. girdled by 'virginity and purity', they can no longer marry. The mention of virginity in this commentary, however, has a much deeper meaning, as it refers to the nuptial union between the Church, that is the Christian souls, and Christ in the Eucharist. In this marriage, according to the Letter to the Ephesians, the Bride, the glorious Church, cleansed from all 'spot and wrinkle' is presented to the Bridegroom: this cleansed, virginal life is the marriage in Christ. In the Eucharist, the believers and Christ 'shall become one flesh' (Eph 5:23).

These references to the Divine Liturgy in the Sophia commentary have fundamental theological significance which will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 8. Most importantly, however, they place the icon within a liturgical context: the fiery coal of Divinity, that is the deified Body of Christ, is flanked by John the Baptist, who is compared with the bishop celebrating the liturgy, and by the Theotokos who is an example for the believers, approaching the Eucharist, to imitate. In the light of its commentary, therefore, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is a visualization of the 'temple of God', the Christian altar on which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

The explanation of the Wisdom icon is followed by two short passages, *The Seal of Virginity* and *The Fountain of Wisdom* in the first redaction (see the Critical

³⁴ Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 388. Highlighted words are quoted by the Sophia commentary.

edition). That these two texts belong to the commentary is attested by, among other things, the shared quotations from the liturgical commentary in the Sophia commentary and *The Seal of Virginité*. The liturgical commentary invites an imitation of virginal life, of which it provides a definition: ‘the virginal life is life according to Christ, with Christ...virginité connects with angels those who love it’.³⁵ The second half of this definition is quoted in *The Seal of Virginité* which acclaims the virginal life with a citation from John Chrysostom’s sermon *On Virginité*.³⁶ Christ himself compared the eternal life with the angelic life: ‘For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven’ (Mark 12:25). Correspondingly, Sophia is not only a bird but also an angel: she is the allegorical image of the cleansed and redeemed soul who ‘participates in the great light’ of the Eucharist—she is the symbol of the virginal-angelic life.³⁷ According to the Sophia commentary, in common with angels, Sophia has ribbon over ears, because ‘a pure life is equal to angels’. The bird and angelic symbols, therefore, appear intertwined in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

The Wedding Garments and Eschatology— *The Fountain of Wisdom*

In the first and second recensions of the Sophia commentary, *The Fountain of Wisdom* (Section III in the critical edition) provides further explanations of the Wisdom icon. *The Fountain of Wisdom* is known as an independent text from two earlier manuscripts: apart from the aforementioned *Merilo Pravednoe* (Mazur. 640), it is also present in the manuscript of the Novgorod hieromonk, Trifon Skiman (RNB, Sof. 1262, f. 10r–10v) who lived in the Vidgoshchenskii Monastery at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³⁸ Although the so-called *Trifonov Collection* is older than the *Merilo Pravednoe* containing *The Fountain of Wisdom*, the version of this early-fifteenth century manuscript is apparently newer than that of the *Merilo Pravednoe*: it is longer with several additions to the earlier text and its version is closer to, yet not fully identical with, *The Fountain*

³⁵ Afanas’eva, 378. Highlighted words are quoted by the Sophia commentary.

³⁶ *De virginitate*; CPG 4313; PG 48, 540. This quotation also appears in the *Enlightener* written by Iosif Volotskii at the end of the fifteenth century which shows further textual parallels with this part of the Sophia commentary: it is likely that both texts cite the same still unknown common source. Igumen Iosif Volotskii, *Prosvetitel’, ili oblichenie eresi zhidovstvuiushchikh* (Kazan: Tipoligrafia Imperatorskago Universiteta, 1857), 460.

³⁷ For the light symbolism of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, see Chapter 9.

³⁸ I am grateful to Konstantin Vershinin who called my attention to this information. Cf. Vershinin, *Merilo Pravednoe v istorii drevnerusskoi knizhnosti i prava*, 205. For Trifon Skiman and the so-called *Trifonov Collection* (with further bibliography): A. I. Alekseev, *Pod znakom kontsa vremen: ocherki russkoi religioznosti kontsa XIV—nachala XVI vv.* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), 72–9; G. M. Prokhorov, ‘Trifon Skiman’, in *SKKDR*, vol. II/2, 1989, 441–3.

of *Wisdom* in the Sophia commentary.³⁹ The link of the Sophia commentary to the *Trifonov Collection* is relevant, as it assists in the dating and the localization of the commentary, by connecting it to Novgorod and by suggesting that it was created after the turn of the fifteenth century.

Further, *The Fountain of Wisdom* is also a compilation with many unacknowledged quotations: it cites extensively Andrew of Crete's (ca. 660–740) *Sermon on Lazarus Saturday*; it takes over some words from *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John Climacus (sixth century); *On the leprosy* (CPG 1815) by Methodius of Patara (Olympos; †311) and the *Merilo Pravednoe* itself.⁴⁰ From the perspective of dating, the quotations from *The Ladder* are particularly significant. While the early version of *The Fountain of Wisdom* quotes the old so-called Preslav translation of *The Ladder*, the extended *Fountain* in both the *Trifonov Collection* and the Sophia commentary cites the Athonite translation of *The Ladder* (see the Critical edition in the Appendix). The Athonite translation goes back to the second half of the fourteenth century and was disseminated in Rus after 1390, when Metropolitan Kiprian (c.1330–1406) took his autograph *Ladder* of 1387 (MDA 152) to Rus.⁴¹ This translation swiftly diffused in Novgorod from the early fifteenth century onwards: the lavishly decorated Novgorod manuscripts of *The Ladder* from the first decades of the century already contain the Athonite translation of the text.⁴² This indicates that, much like the version of *The Fountain of Wisdom* in the *Trifonov Collection*, the Sophia commentary cannot be any earlier than the turn of the fifteenth century.

Most of the above quotations from patristic literature in *The Fountain of Wisdom* explain Sophia's wedding 'garments of light' implying that the clothing metaphors play a distinctive role in the Sophia commentary. Together with the aforementioned explanations of clerical vestments in liturgical commentaries, they form part of a complex theology of clothing which is of biblical origin and was developed and frequently utilized by Christian authors. Investigating early Syriac theological tradition, Sebastian Brock writes about a 'complete and consistent' clothing imagery, 'where the individual elements are all neatly and logically interrelated', which is capable of expressing 'the entire span of salvation history'.⁴³

³⁹ Vershinin, *Merilo Pravednoe v istorii drevnerusskoi knizhnosti i prava*, 205.

⁴⁰ Vershinin, 205–8.

⁴¹ T. G. Popova, 'Slaviano-russkaia rukopisnaia traditsiia Lestvitsy Ioanna Sinaiskogo' (Doctoral dissertation, Moscow, Moskovskii Pedagogicheskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 2011), 191–3.

⁴² NGM no. KP 32725–1/KR-138; RGB, f. 439 (collection of A. Desnitskii), kart. 21, 1; see also RGB, Rum. 200. Popova, 197–200; E. S. Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi: Litsevye rukopisi Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2011), 227–48.

⁴³ S. P. Brock, 'Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition', in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter: internationales Kolloquium, Eichstätt 1981*, ed. M. Schmidt (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 11.

The clothing metaphors of Christian literature are connected with the following four main points of salvation history: (1) before the fall, Adam and Eve were clothed in ‘robes of glory’ which were—similarly to the vestments of Sophia—priestly and royal garments; (2) after the fall Adam and Eve lost their ‘robes of glory’ and were clothed in ‘tunics of skin’ (Gen 3:21); (3) in the incarnation, God ‘put on Adam’, that is the human body, in order to re-clothe mankind; and (4) as a consequence of Christ’s baptism in Jordan, Christians receive their new, priestly, and royal ‘robe of glory’ at baptism (Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14; Eph 4:22–4). This ‘robe of glory’ is the wedding garment for the eschatological banquet of the bridegroom (John 3:29; Matt 9:15, Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34–5), the son of the king (Matt 22:1–14). The believers must keep it unsoiled by sin, otherwise they will be cast out of the kingdom (Matt 22:12) and will not be ‘called to the marriage supper of the Lamb’ (Rev 19:9).⁴⁴

The Slavonic translation of Andrew of Crete’s *Sermon on Lazarus Saturday*, extensively cited in *The Fountain of Wisdom*, contains this clothing imagery in its developed form.⁴⁵ The sermon was already present in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century *Uspenskii Collection*, but it also preserved in excerpts.⁴⁶ In this liturgical homily read at the end of the Great Lent and at the beginning of the Holy Week, Andrew invites the believers to the banquet of Christ, returning from Bethany to Jerusalem to fulfil his redemptory work after raising Lazarus (John 11). This invitation, which contrasts the wedding robe with Lazarus’s odorous burial linen, forms the spine of *The Fountain of Wisdom*’s description of the garment of Sophia:

Blessed is the one who wove for himself a robe worthy of the wedding-feast of his union with God by means of [his] freedom from passion, so that he might eat the sacrificed Pascha in purity and to meet the Lord as he approached from Bethany in glory and spread beneath Him the white garments . . . This is the all-holy flesh, which he assumed superessentially from us and on our behalf. Who is so prudent a tradesman that he has negotiated for his own salvation in this manner (cf. Matt 13:45–6)? Would that you, the people of Christ, the new inheritance, would trade for these pearls in these days of Lent. For this commerce is the best **for those who know the blessed life. There, tested clean gold is self-mastery; pearls are tears; brilliant stones are the acts of the acts of virtue; silver is purity; clean garment is good morals, good spices are the words of the Lord.** There, a medallion to be worn

⁴⁴ Brock, 11–13.

⁴⁵ *Homilia in Lazarum quadriduanum*, CPG 8177; BHG 2218; M. B. Cunningham, ‘Andreas of Crete’s Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: The Preacher and His Audience’, *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997): 22–6; M. B. Cunningham, ‘Andreas of Crete’s Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: A Critical Edition and Commentary’ (PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1983).

⁴⁶ For the liturgical usage of this homily in Rus: Čertorickaja, *Vorläufiger Katalog*, 240–1. For the dissemination of the text in excerpts: Veršinina, *Merilo Pravednoe v istorii drevnerusskoi knizhnosti i prava*, 207–8.

about one's neck is the humility which indicates obedience, while the earrings and golden pendant <are to be found in> **the precious keeping of the commandments**. But why should I describe to you the details of **the precious gifts of the enduring fast**, which **teaches us by its very nature** that everything which results from it benefits its possessor? Who then is he who has come forth to this great market? Who has followed Martha? Who has imitated Mary, of the sisters of Lazarus? Who like them has purchased **pearls**, that is, **tears** and offered them to God, after weeping for his own dead soul as they wept for Lazarus? . . . But perhaps someone will ask on hearing these things, 'Behold, I am imitating the harlot, and I am offering, if not the ointment, then my own tears.' Where is the supper? Where is Christ? Where are the means whereby the remission of sins is obtained? Where? Come, and I shall show you it clearly: in the Church, in thy treasury. What do I say in the Church? In thy heart. There is Christ.⁴⁷

Andrew's metaphor of wedding robes, similarly to the Russian Sophia commentary, has a strong moral message. By linking the singular ornaments of the garments with the Christian virtues, the richly decorated garment denotes the purified, immaculate, virginal, and virtuous soul. This does not mean, in either case, that this is simple moral or monastic imagery, as 'the question of the relationship of the human person to clothing is basically not a moral concern, but a metaphysical and theological one'.⁴⁸ Andrew's clothing metaphor, which refers to all main aspects of salvation history (*eikonomia*), proves that the message of the *Novgorod Sophia* goes far beyond purely moral or ascetic concerns. The wedding robe, which Andrew of Crete offers to the believers, is a garment replacing Lazarus's funeral robes, the sinful and corruptible skin of the first Adam. This is the fallen humanity which was put on the Second Adam, Christ, in order to re-clothe mankind in a new one, into the 'robe of union with God by dispassion'. Consequently, Sophia wears 'this new robe of union with God', which can be found in the Church, a place of purification and forgiveness of sins—in the heart of people. Andrew also invites his audience to the Supper of Christ, which in historical time is the Last Supper; in the present, however, it is the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist; and in the eternity, it is Christ's wedding banquet in his eternal kingdom, to which 'many are called, but few are chosen', and where it is impossible to enter without wedding garments, ornamented by virtues, and cleansed from the soil of sin.

The clothing metaphor of the Sophia commentary underlines the eschatological message of the icon: 'The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made

⁴⁷ In *Lazarum quadrivium*, 42–4. S. I. Kotkov, ed., *Uspenskii sbornik XII–XIII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 383–4. Translation by Mary Cunningham (with some modifications according to the Slavonic version): Cunningham, 'Andreas of Crete's Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: A Critical Edition and Commentary', 259–60. Highlighted words are quoted by the Sophia commentary.

⁴⁸ E. Peterson, 'A Theology of Dress', *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20 (1993): 558–68.

herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints' (Rev 19:7). Sophia has 'garments of light' and she 'sits upon a throne' which 'represents the repose of the future world'. The intertwined Eucharistic-eschatological significance of the Sophia icon becomes explicit at the end of the erotapokritic passage commenting on the vestments of Sophia: the soul's 'awaited reward' is the 'glorious flesh and blood of Christ'.

The subsequent description of the heavenly reward contains a further important citation. The quotation comes from *The Ladder's* fourth chapter on 'the blessed and ever-memorable obedience'.⁴⁹ *The Ladder* was earlier cited regarding the clothing metaphor (from the Preslav translation), while the new (Trifonov) version of *The Fountain of Wisdom* has a new quotation (now from the new Athonite translation) to underline the ecclesiological relevance of the clothing imagery. This part of *The Ladder* demonstrates the possibility of deification for each member of the Church which is defined as unity in love. For John Climacus, the foundation of this perfection, which he calls wisdom, is obedience and humility:

Wise man, if you have consciously within you the power of him who said, 'I can do everything in Christ Who strengthens me' (Phil 4:13), if the Holy Spirit has come upon you as on the Holy Virgin with the dew of purity, if the power of the Most High has cast the shadow of patience over you, then, like Christ our God, gird your loins with the towel of obedience, rise from the supper of stillness, wash the feet of your brethren in a spirit of contrition, and roll yourself under the feet of the brethren with humbled will... Dearest father, all men will come to know that we are disciples of Christ if, as we live together, we have love for one another. Stay here with us, my friend, stay. Drink down ridicule by the hour, as if it were living water. **David tried every pleasure under the sun, and at the end was at a loss saying 'Behold what is good or what is pleasant?' (Ps 132:1). And there was nothing except that brother should live together in unity.**⁵⁰

John Climacus's quotation from Psalm 132 creates a link with the aforementioned Church-definition of the *Ecclesiastical History* which cites the same psalm (Ps 132:2). The concepts of humility, virginity, deification, the resemblance to the Theotokos, love, and salvation appear in an ecclesiological framework in both

⁴⁹ For John Climacus's *The Ladder of Divine Ascent (Scala Paradisi)*: T. G. Popova, *Die 'Leiter zum Paradies' des Johannes Klimakos: Katalog der slavischen Handschriften* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 9–32; Popova, 'Slaviano-russkaia rukopisnaia traditsiia Lestvitsy Ioanna Sinaiskogo', 12–141; K. Ware, 'Introduction', in *John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (London: S.P.C.K, 1982), 1–70.

⁵⁰ Translation by Colm Luibhéid and Norman Russell. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. C. Luibhéid and N. Russell (London: S.P.C.K, 1982), 103–4. For the Slavonic version and its Greek original: Tatiana Popova, "'Slovo o posluchanii'" Ioanna Sinaiskogo (Po tekstu drevnego slavianskogo perevoda Lestvitsy)', *Palaeoslavica* 15, no. 1 (2007): 215–16.



Fig. 2.2. *Faith, Hope, and Love*, miniature in *The Heavenly Ladder* by John Climacus, twelfth century. Sinai Gr. 418, f. 283r, St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

Credit: Library of Congress Collection of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai.

The Ladder of John and the Sophia commentary. This idea of obedience and 'humble wisdom' comes to visual expression with the gesture of John in the icon of the Novgorod Sophia cathedral, with his right hand elevated to his chest (Cat. 3, see also Chapter 11).

This reference to *The Ladder* in the Rus text has another iconographic aspect. Nikodim Kondakov drew attention to a miniature in a twelfth-century Climacus-manuscript as a possible source of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography (Sinai Gr. 418, f. 283r, Fig. 2.2).⁵¹ It illustrates the highest, Thirtieth Step of *The Ladder*, discussing the 'supreme trinity among virtues', faith, hope, and love: the three virtues appear as winged female figures here, with Charity clad in royal garments and sitting on a throne in the centre. Above her head, the blessing bust of Christ is depicted. Charity and Christ are enclosed within a mandorla.⁵² Although it is tempting to hypothesize a link between the two iconographies on the basis of the main structure

⁵¹ N. P. Kondakov, *Histoire de l'art byzantin: considéré principalement dans les miniatures*, vol. II (Paris: Librairie de l'art, 1891), 135.

⁵² J. R. Martin, *The Illustration of The Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 102, Fig. 215.

of the images and especially that of the rendering of the central two figures of the winged royal Charity and Christ, it is not very likely that this isolated and unique Byzantine representation influenced the Russian imagery. Instead, the Climacus-quotations in the commentary betray a conceptual relationship: the ecclesiological formula of the blessing Christ above the winged female figure in both cases visualizes the love between the body and the head, the bride and bridegroom, that is the Church and Christ.⁵³ John Climacus places love on the top of his ladder of virtues. Once arrived there, the soul meets Christ appearing from heaven and saying: ‘Unless, beloved, you renounce your gross flesh, you cannot know my beauty.’ It is this eschatological perspective that it is reflected in the closing passage of the Sophia commentary (and *The Fountain of Wisdom*): ‘I have seen—as it is said—an end of all (Ps 118:9), but virtue is without ending, for ever, as long as angels will be and seraphim exist.’

*

On the basis of the analysis of the unacknowledged quotations in the Sophia commentary, the first conclusion is that the Sophia commentary is a Russian, not Greek, literary composition dating from after the turn of the fifteenth century, using extracts from Slavic translations of Patristic literature. The citations support the assumption that the *Novgorod Sophia* is an ecclesiological and not Trinitarian image. The function of the commentary is to evoke the manifold aspects of Christian ecclesiological doctrine, which is visualized and explained with the help of bird, angel, nuptial, and clothing metaphors. Although in some cases there is an interconnection of wisdom and virginity (most importantly, in the figure of Joseph), the first two redactions of the commentary and their citations do not provide a straightforward answer to the question of why the winged figure is named Wisdom, Sophia. The response is hidden not in the commentary itself, but in the satellite-texts accompanying the first and second recensions of the Sophia commentary in the manuscripts.

⁵³ For the bust of blessing Christ as ecclesiological formula, especially popular in Novgorod icon-painting, see Chapter 9.

3

Medieval Russian Sophiology

The Context of the Sophia Commentary in the Manuscripts

The common feature of the first and second recensions of the commentary on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is that they are part of a fixed set of ten texts (see Table 1). How deeply and organically the Sophia commentary is embedded in this context is clear given the difficulty present in deciding where the commentary ends and where other entries begin. This very close, almost inseparable, relationship exists not only textually but also conceptually, which makes these ten texts an unexplored source for studying medieval Russian Sophiology. The sequencing of the texts is the same in the three previously studied manuscripts (Chudov, Trinity and Solovki), where the opening piece is the Sophia commentary itself, whereas in the newly explored Novosibirsk manuscript, the oldest of the four, the commentary and the following two short passages close the block.

These texts have become the object of two studies in recent years. In his 2010 article, Anatolii Grigorenko focused on the manuscript of the Trinity-St Sergii monastery, once belonging to the famous Metropolitan Zosima (1490–1494), and published six of the texts surrounding the commentary. He emphasized their sophiological meaning and the fact that they touch upon the problem of virginity in the context of patristic heritage. However, he did not mention the philological questions concerning these texts, both as individual pieces and as a unique set of different entries.¹ In contrast, Vladimir Itkin, in his incomplete doctoral thesis, published online, made an attempt not only to distinguish these ten texts as an independent block in the manuscripts and describe them but also to solve the philological questions raised by them on the basis of the Novosibirsk manuscript which he discovered and explored.²

What makes the problem of this block of ten entries especially complex is that, in the Novosibirsk manuscript, the text preceding the Sophia commentary is the earliest occurrence of a well-known Rus erotapokritic compilation entitled *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian*.³ This question-and-response text is significant because of its close relationship with the letter of Metropolitan Kliment

¹ A. Iu. Grigorenko, 'Ideia Sofii v drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti', *Vestnik Russkoi khristianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii* 11, no. 4 (2010): 8–17.

² See Chapter 1 and Appendix.

³ Ponyrko, *Epistoliarnoe nasledie Drevnei Rusi*, 94–148; Istrin, 'Zamechaniia o sostave Tolkovoi Palei, IV'; Nikol'skii, *O literaturnykh trudakh*.

Smoliatich debating the problem of allegorical exegesis (see Chapter 1), as well as with the thirteenth-century miscellany, the *Izbornik*, an exceptionally rich treasury of early Rus questions-and-answers literature. This latter, as we have seen, contains two allegorical-exegetical erotapokriseis on Proverbs 9:1.⁴ For Itkin, therefore, this set of ten texts is important because of the dating and contextualizing of Kliment Smoliatich's letter. According to his hypothesis, this block goes back to the thirteenth century, and is the result of the editorial work of the commentator of Kliment Smoliatich's letter, a monk named Afanasii.⁵

Nonetheless, given the presence of the Sophia commentary in this set, a fact which Itkin failed to notice, this hypothesis seems untenable. Both the citation of the fourteenth-century translation of John Climacus's *Ladder* in the new version of *The Fountain of Wisdom* and the art-historical evidence for the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, which will be discussed below, make the thirteenth-century dating impossible. However, in terms of the history of the *Novgorod Sophia*, and more broadly that of allegorical icon-painting, it is of great significance that the Novosibirsk manuscript 'creates an impression of a workbook, where the compiler recorded all the texts he was interested in'.⁶ But in contrast to Itkin's assessment, it is unlikely that the source of this workbook was Afanasii's alleged thirteenth-century literary-compiler work; rather, the Novosibirsk manuscript suggests an intense fifteenth-century literary and theological activity. It comprises new textual units, mostly questions and responses, created on the basis of both earlier and contemporary Slavonic literary heritage.⁷ The Novosibirsk collection, therefore, provides a wider cultural, conceptual, and literary context of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* as an icon and its commentary.

Without conducting more detailed philological examinations which lie beyond the scope of this study, it is necessary to underline a few facts which suggest that the Novosibirsk collection reflects an editorial stage in the development of the Sophia commentary and thus highlight its importance for the study of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography. It is of note that the title of the commentary in the Novosibirsk collection, the eighth text in the block of ten entries, is written in clumsy letters and extends into the margin: it contains only the first part of the later title: 'Words selected from numerous books, questions and answers and different passages', whereas the second half of the title can be found on the bottom of the page as a marginal note: *Sermon (Word) of John Chrysostom on the Wisdom* (Fig. 3.1).

⁴ Watrobska, 'The Izbornik of the XIIIth Century', 22–4.

⁵ The only evidence for the existence of the monk Afanasii is the title of Kliment's letter which has been preserved in two manuscripts from the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Cf. Ponyrko, *Epistolarnoe nasledie Drevnei Rusi*, 123–4.

⁶ Itkin, 'Tolkovaniia Afanasiia', 106.

⁷ They included the aforementioned liturgical commentary named *Tolkovaia sluzhba* (ff. 73r–88v), the erotapokritic version of the fourteenth-century Slavonic *Corpus Dionysiacum* (ff. 296v–301v), as well as a passage from the work of the fourteenth-century Hesychast author, David Dysipatos on the Tabor light (f. 100r–100v). Cf. Itkin, 'Postateinoe opisanie'.

In the second redaction, the title—*Words selected from numerous books, questions and answers and different passages. Sermon on the Wisdom*—belongs not only to the Sophia commentary but to the entire set of entries, as the Sophia commentary serves as the first, opening text. This is especially remarkable in the Solovki manuscript, where the title is highlighted by ornamented letters (*zastavka*), indicating the cohesion of the following texts all having titles written with simple, plain letters.

In the three later manuscripts, the block consists of nine texts only, since the seventh entry of the Novosibirsk collection, the above-mentioned longer piece of erotapokriseis entitled *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian*, became an independent unit after the block of nine entries as a result of the replacement of the Sophia commentary and the two following texts. In the Novosibirsk manuscript the erotapokritic *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian* was still divided into three parts, where only the first 24 questions belonged to the block of ten entries (ff. 109r–124r); the following 25–76 questions took place on ff. 275r–286v, whereas the last seventy-seventh question can be found on f. 251r. Therefore, the sequence of the entries together with the positions of the questions and answers of the *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian* clearly indicate that the Novosibirsk manuscript demonstrates an exploratory stage in the formation of the block of the Sophia commentary. The fact that in the later, final version, the opening text, which gives the title for the whole set, is the Sophia commentary, informs that the driving force of the evolution of this block was our commentary text with its sophiological content.

Further important consequences of this observation relate to the erotapokritic *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian*. As we have seen, in the Novosibirsk collection the formation of this erotapokritic piece was still incomplete, whereas the three later manuscripts, which contain the complete sophiological block with nine entries, preserve the *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian* in its final form. It is necessary to emphasize that the *Selected Words* in this complete version, just like the above-mentioned block with nine texts, has been preserved only in these three manuscripts. This proves firstly, that the textual history of the *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian* and that of the Sophia commentary with its satellite texts are inseparable. Secondly, it challenges the view that the *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian*, as a unified, permanent erotapokritic text, goes back either to the twelfth or the thirteenth century. Rather, it is the result of a fifteenth-century compilatory work and part of a larger project which also created the Sophia commentary. Thirdly, the close textual link of this text to Kliment Smoliatich's twelfth-century letter (with the unidentified comments of the mysterious monk Afanasii), which defends the allegorical exegesis, indicates a renewed interest in the problem of allegory in the fifteenth century. It is difficult to imagine that this interest was unrelated to the origins of Russian allegorical icon-painting, resulting in the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

These nine texts surrounding the Sophia commentary raise problems not only as one or two permanent sets of texts but also as independent passages. The textual histories of these entries are another promising field of research which goes beyond the scope of this investigation. Here I present merely a short outline of how these texts widen the symbolism of the *Sophia* icon, expressed in the Sophia commentary.

The Hagia Sophia in Constantinople

The Sophia commentary describes the winged allegorical figure of Ecclesia without giving a direct explanation as to why she is named 'Wisdom'. The first entry of the sophiological block in the Novosibirsk manuscript gives a reason for this. The text is well known among Slavists, as this question and response on Solomon's chalice in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was interpolated into the ninth-century Slavonic *Life of Constantine (Vita Constantini)*.⁸ In the *Vita*, it is the Apostle of the Slavs, Saint Cyril-Constantine, who solves the riddle of the inscription on the mysterious chalice of King Solomon in the Hagia Sophia. In the erotapokritic versions, which go back to a Greek original and are present in the thirteenth-century *Izbornik*, the clues are in the responses. The three sentences inscribed on the chalice are prophecies concerning the birth, arrest, and resurrection of Christ. The presence of this text in the sophiological block connects the person of King Solomon, the author of the Wisdom books, with the New Testament and represents him as a prophet of Christ's incarnation. In addition, Solomon was the builder of the Temple of Jerusalem with the Holy of Holies, to whom the Byzantine emperor Justinian (527–565), the builder of St Sophia (532–537), perceived himself the heir of (Fig. 3.2). According to the Byzantine legend of the foundation of the Hagia Sophia, the Slavonic translation of which was widely disseminated in Rus, after completing the construction, Justinian proclaimed: 'Solomon, I have outdone you, as you had not created such a beauty in the house of Lord, in the Holy of Holies, as I constructed.'⁹ The chalice from

⁸ For the Legend of Solomon's chalice with further bibliography: V. M. Lur'e, 'Chasha Solomona i skinia na Sione. Chast' 1. Nadpis' na Chashe Solomona: tekst i kontekst', *Byzantinorossica* 3 (2005): 8–74; M. Taube, 'Solomon's Chalice, the Latin Scriptures and the Bogomils', *Slovo* 37 (1987): 161–9; R. Picchio, 'Chapter 13 of Vita Constantini: Its Text and Contextual Function', *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 7 (1985): 133–52; I. Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription of Solomon's Chalice in the Vita Constantini', in *To Honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, 11 October 1966*, ed. R. Jakobson (The Hague; Paris: Mouton, 1967), 1806–17.

⁹ O. V. Tvorogov, *Letopisets ellinskii i rimskii*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1999), 371. See also: F. I. Buslaev, 'Skazanie o sozdanii tserkvi sv. Sofii', in *Sochineniia*, vol. I. Sochineniia po arkhologii i istorii iskusstva (St. Petersburg: Izd. Otdel. russ. iaz. i slovesnosti Imp. akad. nauk, 1908), 296. For the Byzantine legend of the foundation of the Constantinople Hagia Sophia and its Slavonic translation (with further bibliography): S. A. Davydova, 'Skazanie o sv. Sofii tsaregradskoi' v Letopistse Ellinskom i Rimskom', *TODRL* 52 (2001): 561–6; O. A. Belobrova, 'Skazanie o postroenii khrama sviatoi Sofii', in *SKKDR*, vol. II/2, 1989, 386.



Fig. 3.2. St Sophia, Constantinople, 532–7.

Credit: Murat Beşbudak, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90900449>

Solomon's Holy of Holies preserved in St Sophia was a symbol of the continuity between the New and Old Testaments, Synagogue and Ecclesia, the Old and New Jerusalem.

As the church-definition of the *Ecclesiastical History* testifies, medieval thought did not differentiate between the constructed church and the Church, the community of believers. The actual physical church building was perceived as Christ's body, the bride of Christ, and Christianity as a whole. In this respect, Hagia Sophia was regarded as the universal Christian Church, the New Jerusalem, which took the place of Synagogue, Solomon's Temple in the Old Jerusalem. The first entry of the sophiological block in the Novosibirsk manuscript, therefore, reveals that the Church-Bride described in the commentary is Hagia Sophia. Nevertheless, the implicit reference to Cyril, the Apostle to the Slavs, suggests that she symbolizes not only the Constantinople Hagia Sophia but also the Slavonic Sophia Churches, founded in Kyiv, Polotsk, and Novgorod 'after the Greek prototype' following the Christianization of Rus (see also Chapters 7 and 12).¹⁰

¹⁰ For the Hagia Sophia churches in Rus: F. von Lilienfeld, 'Das Patrozinium der "Heiligen Sophia" in Europa und besonders in Russland', in *Tausend Jahre Taufe Rußlands: Rußland in Europa*, ed. H. Goltz (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1993), 469–76; G. Florovsky, 'The Hagia Sophia Churches', in *Aspects of Church History*, Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, IV (Belmont, Mass: Nordland, 1975), 131–5.

Wisdom as Orthodoxy

The next entries do not mention wisdom. Yet their function in the sophiological block is to demonstrate the Christian concept of wisdom and knowledge as true teaching about Christ's incarnation, i.e. as Orthodoxy. In this respect, the text of the seventh-century Palestinian monk Antiochus is of high importance. His allegorical introduction to his compilatory ascetical work, entitled *Pandects* and translated into Slavonic in the tenth century, was split into three passages constituting three entries in our block.¹¹

Antiochus, like the Sophia commentary, does not directly cite the Proverbs; his reasoning begins with the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs (Song 6:8): 'There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number.' In Antiochus's interpretation, the sixty queens are the biblical books, the eighty concubines are the uncanonical, that is heretical writings, and the virgins are the 'new writings of the teachers of the Church'. These are the virgins 'because of the chastity of their words'. Afterwards, Antiochus utilizes clothing metaphors, well known from the Sophia commentary. The significance of this passage is that it creates a highly complex, multi-layered symbolism of garment-humanity which connects its Christological, Soteriological, and Ecclesiological meanings with the concept of Orthodoxy:

From the linen of the sixty queens I took a few threads and created a girdle . . . Just as the fabric made of variety of parts unites into one single garment, so too all the prophecies of the books of the divine inspiration unite into the garment of the Lord's dispensation, which was taken from the holy Virgin Theotokos Mary. It was corruptible, because it was similar to our passionate nature; he made it incorruptible in order to save us who are captivated by corruption and lead us into incorruption and by the dead coming to life he clothed us again in immortality. I do not speak about the girdle of the Jews (Jer 13:1-5), which was hidden by Jeremiah and put into the river Euphrates, but that of the new grace, which the Lord showed us when he girded himself and washed the feet of his disciples (Joh 13:1-3) . . . Christ clothed his Church in the beauty of this girdle, in order to cover our sins and our nakedness of Adam's fall.¹²

For Antiochus, the garment is not only the humanity which Christ put on and the incorruptible clothing of the redeemed Church but also the inspired writings, the prophetic and 'chaste' words and the teachings of the Church Fathers which

¹¹ Antiochus, *Pandecta scripturae sacrae*, CPG 7843; PG 89, 1428-849; Editions of the Slavic translation: J. Popovski, 'The Pandects of Antiochus. Slavic Text in Transcription', *Polata Knigopisnaia* 23-4 (1989). VMCh, vol. XIII/1: 24 December (1910), 1864-2191.

¹² Popovski, 4-5. VMCh, vol. XIII/1: 24 December (1910), 1870.

constitute the ‘garment of the Lord’s dispensation’. ‘Divine inspiration’, ‘prophecy’, ‘heavenly thoughts’, and ‘chastity of words’ are connected here with the notions of virginity and, consequently, wisdom, just as in the Sophia commentary: ‘Those who love virginity give birth to words of virtue, that is, they teach the insane.’ The beauty of Christ’s girdle around the hip of the Church is a sign of her redemption and Orthodoxy.

Antiochus contrasts Jesus’s girdle, the girdle of the new grace, with the girdle of the Jews. This opposition between the Old and New Testaments, which has already appeared in the text about the Solomonian prophecy, is the leitmotif of the sixth (in the later versions, ninth) text, containing the interpretation of the Jewish king Jehoash’s (or Joash’s) dream about two women, the red Abinadaba and the white Abishag (3 Kings 1:1–5), symbolizing Synagoga and Ecclesia.¹³ This question-and-answer text, made up of a complex Church allegory, is also present in the thirteenth-century *Izbornik* and its different versions were widely disseminated in literature of Rus. In spite of its relative popularity (a seventeenth-century drawing has also survived representing this allegory), the origin of the text hitherto has been obscure. It begins as follows: ‘So Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, “The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon”’ (4 Kings 14:9; 2 Chron 25:18). In the text, this image of the cedar was extended to Jehoash’s dream, the interpretation of which was given by Amaziah: the thistle (that is the bush) is Christ; the cedar in Lebanon is the orthodox faith of the new people; beside the bush the red woman with dark eyes, which recalls the dark bride of the Song of Songs (Song 1:4), is the Old Law; the white woman is the new true faith leading to the eternal life: the milk of her breasts ‘is the teaching of the holy books’.

The fourth (in the later versions, seventh) entry contains commentaries on the verses of the Book of Isaiah, prophesying Christ’s sacrifice (Isa 42:2–3; 53:7; cf. Matt 12:20; Acts 8:32).¹⁴ The former of these verses constitutes the core of the rite known as the *Prothesis* rite or *Proskomedia*, during which the bread and wine are prepared for the Eucharistic sacrifice, the liturgical re-enactment of Christ’s death and resurrection: ‘He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.’ The text of the *Proskomedia* appears in Rus manuscripts in the thirteenth century for the first

¹³ K. Mitani, ‘The Dream of King Jehoash: A Textual Analysis’, *Scrinium* 14 (2018): 298–317; S. V. Ivanov, ‘“Skazanie o 12 piatnitsakh” i “Son tsaria Ioasa”’, *Indoevropskoe iazykoznanie i klassicheskaia filologiya* 15 (2011): 211–20; M. V. Rozhdestvenskaia, ‘Vetkhovzetnye siuzhety v vopros-otvetnoi slaviano-russkoi apokrificheskoi literature (Beseda trekh sviatitelei, Skazanie o 12 piatnitsakh, Slovo na voskresenie Lazaria)’, *Fundamenta Europae* 4, no. 6–7 (2007): 21–30; V. M. Istrin, ‘K voprosu o “sne tsaria Ioasa”’, *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 315 (1898): 300–9; V. N. Mochul’skii, ‘Son tsaria Ioasa’, *Russkii filologicheskii vestnik* 37 (1897): 97–113; A. S. Uvarov, ‘Risunok simvolicheskoi shkoly XVII veka’, *Arkheologicheskie izvestiia i zametki, izdavaemye Imperatorskim moskovskim arkheologicheskimi obshchestvom*, no. 4 (1896): 93–9.

¹⁴ Grigorenko, ‘Ideia Sofii v drevnerusskoi pismennosti’, 15.

time and following that appearance the rite underwent a profound development.¹⁵ These Eucharistic verses reinforce the liturgical significance of the Wisdom icon. In this entry, Judah, the betrayer of Christ, appears together with the Jews who failed to convert to God: they symbolize sin without repentance, schism, and heresy.¹⁶ In this Eucharistic context, however, the presence of anti-Jewish polemics suggests an anti-Latin agenda (see Chapters 7 and 8). Christian wisdom is now defined as the opposite of all these heresies and apostasies: conversion, repentance, shrift, and the true faith of the Church leading to eternal life.

‘Wisdom has Christ above the head as the head is Wisdom’

In spite of its sophiological content, there is no citation from the Proverbs in the Sophia commentary. The two entries directly following the commentary, however, are either quotations from the Proverbs or paraphrases of some of the sentences of the Solomonic books. The second passage is the Slavonic translation of Proverbs 3:1–7, whilst the first, starting with the incipit ‘Ezra said’, is a paraphrase of different Solomonic proverbial sentences with a moral content, re-emphasizing the importance of the true teaching: ‘A wise man’s heart wishes redemptive teaching, but a fool’s heart walks far from it’ (cf. Eccl 10:2).

More significantly, the first line of the entry is a rewording of Proverbs 8:22: ‘Ezra said: The Lord created Wisdom and gave her to those who love her.’ This passage leads us back to the problem of identifying the winged figure of the *Novgorod Sophia* as a hypostatic image of Christ. The presence of the Proverbs 8:22 just after the Sophia commentary, nearly conflating it with, and emphasizing the created nature of Wisdom, suggests another interpretation.

In order to comprehend the sophiological concept of the Sophia commentary and its satellite texts, it is necessary to return to Athanasius of Alexandria and his *Second Discourse Against Arians*, where he faced the problem of exegesis of the same Proverbs 8:22. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Athanasius, interpreting this passage, proposed to ‘inquire in person’, that is to clarify, who Wisdom is, speaking these words: ‘The Lord created me in the beginning of His ways for His works.’ The Arians argued that this created Wisdom was Christ in accordance with 1 Corinthians 1:24 (‘Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God’) and Proverbs 9:1 (‘Wisdom has built her house’) and hence challenged his divinity. Athanasius, in contrast, elaborated a more sophisticated exegesis of the verse:

¹⁵ For the Proskomedia with further bibliography: M. S. Zheltov, ‘Proskomidiia’, in *PE*, vol. LVIII, 2020, 419–22. For the Proskomedia in Rus see Afanas’eva, *Liturgii Ioanna Zlatoustia i Vasiliia Velikogo*, 123–8. See also Chapters 5 and 7.

¹⁶ For Slavonic *Adversus Iudaeos* literature: A. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2 vols (Lund: Lund University, 2002).

It is plain that our body is Wisdom's house, which It took to become man . . . ; by Solomon Wisdom says of Itself with cautious exactness, not 'I am a creature,' but only 'The Lord created me at beginning of His ways for His works.' Yet not 'created me that I might have being,' nor 'because I have a creature's beginning and origin.' For in this passage, not as signifying the Essence of His Godhead, nor His own everlasting and genuine generation from the Father, has the Word spoken by Solomon, but . . . His manhood and Economy towards us.¹⁷

Athanasius makes a distinction between the Creator-Wisdom who is Christ and the created Wisdom, the humanity which Christ put on in his incarnation. This distinction between the two Wisdoms is the cornerstone of the Athanasian anti-Arian argument and appears not only in theological discourses but also in hymnography. In the Middle Ages, one of its most well-known formulations might have been in the aforementioned Canon, written in the eighth century by Cosmas of Maiuma for Holy Thursday. Here the two Wisdoms, the created one and the Creator, are clearly distinguished but also united in the Person of the incarnated Christ:

Before the ages the Father begat Me, who am Wisdom and Creator, and He established Me as the beginning of His ways. He appointed Me to perform the works which now are mystically accomplished. For though I am by nature the uncreated Word, I make My own the speech and qualities of the manhood that I have assumed.¹⁸

Since the body of Christ is the Church, there is also an ecclesiological aspect to Athanasius' Sophiology which will be a central element in the Sophia commentary:

Not of His substance then is this phrase '*He created*' indicative, . . . but of His bodily coming into being. For then, because God's works were become imperfect and mutilated from the transgression, He is said in respect to the body to be created; that by perfecting them and making them whole, He might present the Church unto the Father, as the Apostle says, 'not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish' (Eph 5:27).¹⁹

¹⁷ *Oratio 2 contra Arianos*, XIX, 44. Translation by J. H. Newman (NPNF-2, IV, 372). Slavonic translation: Weiher, Schmidt, and Škurko, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen*, vol. I. 1–8 Mai, 224.

¹⁸ Canon for Holy Thursday, tone six, Canticle Nine. Mary and K. Ware, *The Lenten Triodion*, 553. In Slavonic: Сѡдѣтельницѹ ѡтѣцѹ прежде вѣкъ премудрѡсть раждаетъ ма, в начатокъ путемъ своимъ в дѣла созда ма также нынѣ тайно совершаема. Слово во несозданно сый естествомъ гласы присволю си, егоже нынѣ приахъ. *Triod' tsvetnaia* (Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1630), 99v. See also Chapter 1.

¹⁹ *Oratio 2 contra Arianos*, XXI. 67. Translation by J. H. Newman (NPNF-2, IV, 385). Slavonic translation: Weiher, Schmidt, and Škurko, *Die grossen Lesemenäen*, vol. I. 1–8 Mai, 238.

The Church presented unto the Father is the humanity which once had been 'imperfect and mutilated', but Christ made it perfect and whole in his incarnation. Although the Anti-Arian sermons of Athanasius were translated at the very beginning of the tenth century, it is unlikely that they were widespread and well known in Rus. The Bulgarian translation has only survived in late fifteenth-century Rus manuscripts copied at the request of the Novgorod Archbishop Gennadii (1484—1504).²⁰ Rather than the original Athanasian works, the aforementioned hymnography and the question-and-answer literature might have been the principal transmitters of the Athanasian sophiological teaching. The thirtieth question of the erotapokritic *Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian* contains a short and simplified summary of this theology. Although in the Novosibirsk manuscript this pair of questions-and-answers is still not part of the block of the ten entries (questions 25–76 are on ff. 275r–286v), it offers further evidence of the cohesion between the *Selected Words* and the Sophia commentary:

- Q: *The Lord created me in the beginning of His way for His works* (Prov 8:22).
 A: The humanity of the Son of God is called Wisdom by Solomon. He calls the pre-eternal Father and God himself the Lord. So, the Lord, it [the verse] says, created me as human being in the latter days... the beginning of all ways is Christ according to his humanity. As in the other place he is called the head of the Church, for he is also the starting point of all ways which lead to paradise.²¹

There is no doubt that the Sophia commentary reflects this Athanasian Sophiology when it describes the winged Sophia not as a hypostatic image of the Son of God, but as Christ's body, that is the Church. This is evident from the first laconic and enigmatic sentence of the commentary concerning two Wisdoms which receives full meaning in the light of the Athanasian theology: 'The Truth of humble Wisdom [i.e. the body of Christ; the Church] has Christ above the head, as the head [of the Church] is Wisdom, Son, the Word of God.'

*

From the study of the satellite texts, it can be concluded that the Sophia commentary, together with its satellite texts, combines the ecclesiological and sophiological themes in an innovative way which can be labelled as 'sophiological synthesis'. Although the biblical, patristic, and liturgical sources used in and around the commentary imply this sophiological content, these texts as independent writings do not connect the Church, the Bride, with the Wisdom of Proverbs in such a systematic way, as does the Sophia commentary.

²⁰ B. L. Fonkich, *Grechesko-russkie kul'turnye sviazi v XV–XVII vv. (Grecheskie rukopisi v Rossii)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 32–6.

²¹ Nikol'skii, *O literaturnykh trudakh*, 180.

The ecclesiological message of the Wisdom icon was first observed by Pavel Florensky. Nevertheless, in the fifteenth century, the aim of linking ecclesiology with Sophiology was not due to a desire to represent ‘the highest and all-encompassing form and living soul of nature and the universe’.²² On the contrary, the purpose of this ‘sophiological synthesis’ was to mark the *boundaries* of the Church: Sophia does not unite the whole universe and mankind, as she resists sin and heresy; not all Churches, but only Hagia Sophia, the Byzantine Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ; it is only the pure teaching identified with Wisdom, the Orthodoxy, which unites with the Bridegroom. The *Novgorod Sophia* has a pointed polemical message, which will become even clearer after investigating the iconography of the image, as well as the contemporary Russian evidences which reveal the historical context behind the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia*.

²² Vladimir Solovyov is quoted by Pavel Florensky (translation by B. Jakim): Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 282. (See also Introduction.)

PART II

IMAGE

There are two conclusions from the previous investigations of the commentary which need verification through an iconographic analysis: (1) the winged figure of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon represents the created Wisdom which is Christ's deified body, that is the Church; and (2) the commentary and its satellite texts combine ecclesiology and Sophiology in an innovative way, in order to create a novel ecclesiological message. This part of the book seeks to explore the validity of these claims or whether there is a conflict between the commentary and the iconography. By doing so, it also aims at placing the Wisdom image in the context of late Byzantine and medieval Russian art. Finally, this research assists in locating and dating the origin of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography.

In investigating the *Novgorod Sophia* image, the part IMAGE discusses the representations of Wisdom in Rus on the one hand and the problem of ecclesiographical iconographies in Byzantine art on the other. The third focal point is the figure of the Theotokos, holding in her hands Christ Emmanuel in an aureole, which has both sophiological and ecclesiological significance. This part will show that the creators of this iconography did not add anything new, but combined different, existing iconographic elements just as innovatively as the author(s) of the commentary did in gathering together, interpolating, and extracting different texts.

Representations of Wisdom in Rus

There are three major sophiological themes with a female or genderless figure identified with Wisdom in painting of Rus which appeared in the late fourteenth or in the fifteenth centuries: (1) ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ illustrating Proverbs 9:1–5; (2) Evangelist representations with the figure of Wisdom; and (3) the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography.

The vast majority of these images are from Novgorod. Apart from Novgorod, only Moscow and Tver have preserved examples of sophiological iconography dating from before the sixteenth century.¹ The unique miniature of the winged angel-Sophia in royal garments, holding ‘her house’ in the *Kyiv Psalter* of 1397, rendered to Psalm 45:5–6 (f. 63r; Fig. 4.1) has been linked by art historians to the Moscow school of icon-painting on stylistic grounds, whilst the iconography of the psalter apparently follows a Byzantine prototype.² Likewise, the figures whispering behind Mark and Matthew in the *Gospels* of the Moscow Lomonosov University Library were created in Moscow or by Moscow painters at the turn of the fifteenth century.³ There are also two Royal Gates made in Tver from the second half of the fifteenth century which represent the evangelists with a personified Wisdom (a panel from the Prokhorov collection and the Royal Gates of the Otroch Monastery).⁴ The *Novgorod Sophia* icon from the Kremlin

¹ Not considering the carved tablets representing ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, to be discussed below, having an uncertain provenience and dating.

According to Engelina Smirnova the *Aer* of Moscow origin from the State Historical Museum (1389), which represents a *Deesis* with *Acheiropoietos* (image of Christ ‘painted without hands’), also shows the personifications of Wisdom in the medallions of Evangelists. Nevertheless, these details seem rather architectural elements than female figures to me. For the *Aer* of 1389: H. C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557): Exhibition Catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 318–19.

² For the meaning of this miniature, see Chapter 9. For the *Kyiv Psalter* of 1397: Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi*, 271.

³ For the *Moscow Gospels* (NB MGU, 2 Bg 42): Smirnova, 269, 271, 463; G. I. Vzdornov, *Iskusstvo knigi v Drevnei Rusi: rukopisnaia kniga Severo-Vostochnoi Rusi XII-nachala XV vekov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980), cat. no. 53; O. S. Popova, *Les miniatures russes du XIe au XVe siècle* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1975), 120, 122, ill. 59; E. I. Koniukhova, *Slaviano-russkie rukopisi XIII–XVII vv. Nauchnoi biblioteki im. A.M. Gor’kogo Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1964), 26–7, 46.

⁴ Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi*, 271.

For the panel of the Royal Gates from the former collection of V. A. Prokhorov (GRM): T. B. Vilinbakhova et al., *Drevlekhranilishche pamiatnikov ikonopisi i tsverkovnoi stariny v Russkom muzee* (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2014), 78. *Sofia* 2000, 282–3; *Sophia* 1999, 314–15.

For the Royal Gates of the former Otroch Monastery in Tver (TsMiAR): L. M. Evseeva and V. M. Sorokaty, *Ikony Tveri, Novgoroda, Pskova XV–XVI vv.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2000), 68–71.

Annunciation Cathedral has also been attributed to either a Moscow or Tver painter (Cat. 1, Fig. 0.4).

It is only the painting of Novgorod, however, which undoubtedly provides images of all three types of sophiological themes before the sixteenth century meaning that these examples are also the oldest: (1) *'Wisdom has built her house'* was depicted in the walls of the Dormition Church in Volotovo (1380s–1390s), destroyed in the Second World War (Fig. 4.2).⁵ Later versions of this iconography have been preserved in the late-fifteenth-century icon of the Malo-Kirillov Monastery, near Novgorod (Fig. 4.3) and in three carved icons of uncertain origin from the sixteenth century (Fig. 4.4).⁶ (2) The female figures inspiring the Evangelists were also depicted in the pendentives of the Volotovo church (Fig. 4.5), as well as in the fifteenth-century *Rogozh Gospel* of Novgorod origin where the standing female figures appear behind the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Fig. 4.6).⁷ (3) Apart from the aforementioned Kremlin icon, there is no extant example of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography from outside the Novgorod Archbishopric until the mid-sixteenth century (see Catalogue).

⁵ For the *Wisdom has built her house* iconography in Rus with further bibliography: Z. Brzozowska, 'Wisdom Has Built Her House (Prov 9:1–6). The History of the Notion in Southern and Eastern Slavic Art in the 14th–16th Centuries', *Studia Ceranea* 5 (2015): 42–53.

For the Volotovo fresco (with bibliography): G. I. Vzdornov, *Volotovo: freski tserkvi Uspeniia na Volotovom pole bliz Novgoroda* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1989), 57–8; 66–7; cat. no. 181; G. M. Prokhorov, *Pamiatniki perevodnoi i russkoi literatury XIV–XV vekov* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1987), 20–7; M. V. Alpatov, *Frescoes of the Church of the Assumption at Volotovo Polye = Freski tserkvi Uspeniia na Volotovom pole* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), 18, 44; T. A. Sidorova, 'Volotovskaia freska "Premudrost' sozda sebe dom" i ee otoshenie k novgorodskoi eresi strigol'nikov', *TODRL* 26 (1977): 212–31.

⁶ For the carved icon of the former Uvarov collection (GIM): V. G. Putsko, 'Reznaia dereviannaia ikona pinskogo kniazia', *Histrychnaia Brama* 1 (2008): 102–10; M. N. Levinson-Nechaeva and M. M. Postnikova-Loseva, 'Prikladnoe iskusstvo Drevnei Rusi', in *Trista vekov iskusstva: iskusstvo Evropeiskoi chasti SSSR*, ed. R. V. Timofeeva (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), 296–7, 303; A. S. Uvarov, 'Reznaia ikona "Premudrost' sozda sebe dom" prinaldezhavshaia pinskomu kniaziu Fedoru Iaroslavichu 1499–1522g', *Drevnosti: Trudy Imperatorskogo moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* 1 (1868): 193–203.

For Master Anania's carved icon (GRM, no. D-47): Putsko, 'Reznaia dereviannaia ikona pinskogo kniazia'; R. Grierson, ed., *Gates of Mystery: The Art of Holy Russia* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1994), 130–3; I. I. Pleshanova, 'Dva reznikh dereviannykh obrazka v sobranii Russkogo muzeia', *Pamiatniki Kul'tury: Novye Otkrytiia*. 1979, 1980, 209–17.

For the carved icon of the former Blangy collection (its current location is unknown): Putsko, 'Reznaia dereviannaia ikona pinskogo kniazia'; Pleshanova, 'Dva reznikh dereviannykh obrazka'; Uvarov, 'Reznaia ikona "Premudrost' sozda sebe dom"'; Ch. Cahier, 'Monument slave religieux du Moyen âge', *Mélanges d'archéologie, d'histoire et de littérature* 1 (1847–1849): 127–49.

For the icon of the Malo-Kirillov Monastery, Novgorod (GTG, no. 28830): Putsko, 'Reznaia dereviannaia ikona pinskogo kniazia'; T. E. Samoilova, ed., *Vera i Vlast': Epokha Ivana Groznogo* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoriko-kul'turnyi muzei-zapovednik 'Moskovskii Kreml', 2007), 200–3; P. Hunt, 'Confronting the End: The Interpretation of the Last Judgment in a Novgorod Wisdom Icon', *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007): 275–325. *Sofia* 2000, 198–201; *Sophia* 1999, 230–3.

⁷ For the Volotovo frescoes: Vzdornov, *Volotovo*, 38, 62, cat. no. 20–2.

For the *Rogozh Gospel* (RGB, F. 247, Collection of Rogozh cemetery, no. 138): Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi*, 256–79; E. S. Smirnova, *Litseye rukopisi Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek* (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), 203–32; E. S. Smirnova, 'Miniatiury dvukh novgorodskikh rukopisei', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Rukopisnaia kniga. Sbornik tretii*, ed. O. I. Podobedova (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 180–203.



Fig. 4.1. 'God is in his midst; he shall not be shaken', miniature to the Psalm 45:6, Kyiv Psalter, 1397. OLDP F 6, f. 63r, RNB.

Credit: National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg.



Fig. 4.2. 'Wisdom has built her house', fresco in the narthex, Dormition church in the Volotovo Field near Novgorod, 1380s, destroyed during the Second World War. Drawing by F. M. Fomin, 1894–1895.

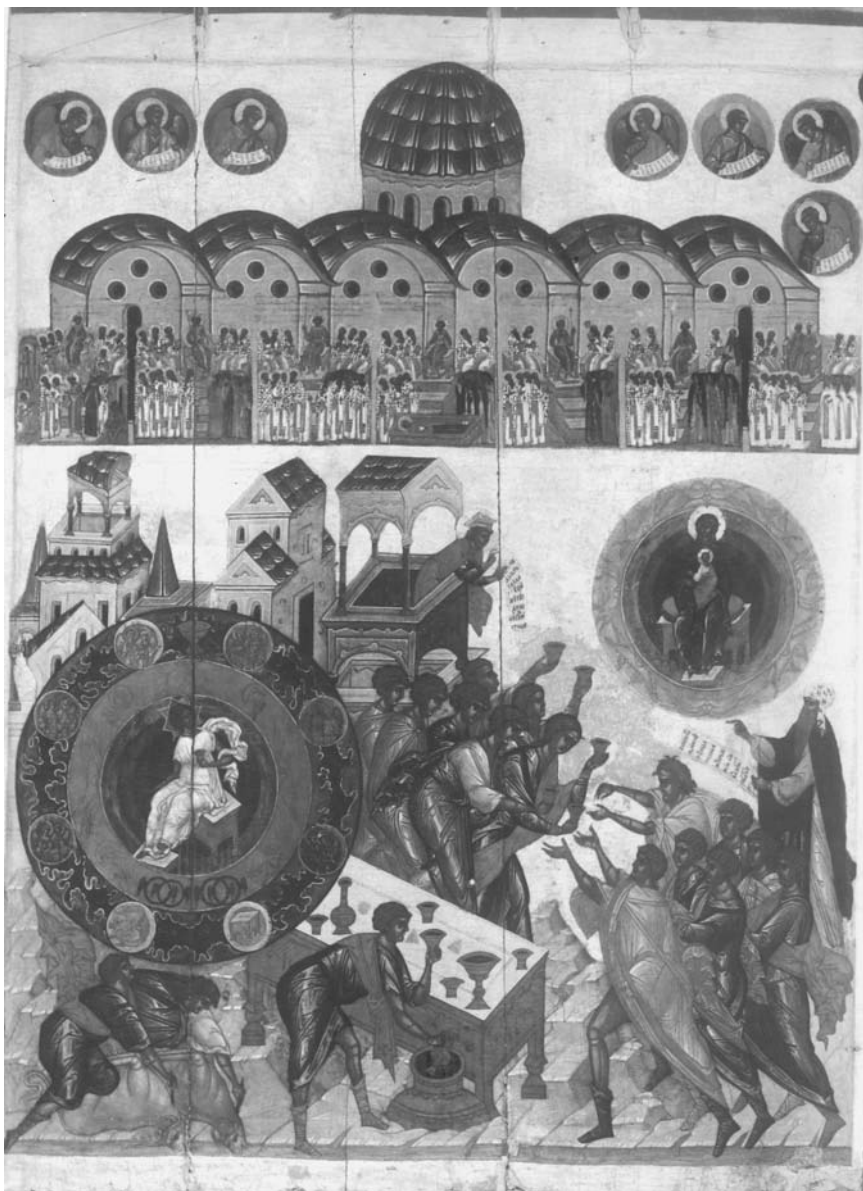


Fig. 4.3. 'Wisdom has built her house', icon from Malo-Kirillov Monastery, near Novgorod, late fifteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Credit: The Warburg Institute, London.



Fig. 4.4. 'Wisdom has built her house', carved wood icon from the former Blangy collection (current location is unknown), first half of the sixteenth century.

Source: Cahier 1847–49, pl. XXV.



Fig. 4.5. Evangelist Luke with Wisdom, fresco in the pendentive, Dormition church in the Volotovo Field near Novgorod, 1380s, destroyed during the Second World War.

Drawing by F. M. Fomin, 1894–1895.



Fig. 4.6. Evangelist Luke with Wisdom, miniature in the Rogozh Gospels, first quarter of the fifteenth century. Collection of Rogozh cemetery, no. 138, f. 144v, Russian State Library, Moscow

Engelina Smirnova suggests a link between these three types of sophiological representations in Novgorod:

Personification of Sophia-Wisdom has a special meaning in the context of Novgorod culture with its long-standing and multilevel interest in the interpretation of this notion. It is impossible not to link the representation of Wisdom behind the evangelists in the pendentives of Volotovo Church and the mural ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ on the vault of the narthex in the same church . . . , as well as the representation of Wisdom in the miniatures of the Novgorod Gospels with the . . . process of formation of the Novgorod version of the composition *Sophia, Wisdom of God*.⁸

What connects the figures behind the evangelists with the central figure of the ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ is their nearly identical iconography: in both cases, an apparently female figure is represented in a short-sleeved chiton and often with

⁸ Smirnova, ‘*Miniatiury dvukh novgorodskikh rukopisei*’, 188.

a himation wrapped around the body, with a ribbon in the hair; she frequently has an eight-point halo over the head, as well as a sceptre. On the destroyed Volotovo fresco (Fig. 4.2), this figure is seated in front of a seven-column building and beside a table with a sceptre and a chalice in her hand. On her left-hand side, there are two groups of people, the ‘servants of Wisdom’; the first group slaughters two calves and the second one turns towards the Virgin enthroned, with chalices in hands. There are three saints in this composition, holding scrolls in their hands: Solomon bends forth from the roof of the seven-pillar temple; the hymnographer Cosmas of Maiuma stands behind the first group of servants and John of Damascus shows his scroll to the enthroned Theotokos. His scroll contains a liturgical text (a verse of Cosmas of Maiuma’s Canon for Holy Thursday), a poetic version of the allegorical exegesis of Proverbs 9:1: ‘Cause of all and Bestower of Life, the infinite Wisdom of God has built His house, from a pure Mother who has not known man. For, clothing Himself in a bodily temple, Christ our God is greatly glorified.’⁹

This text makes it clear that the house built by Sophia is the symbol of the fleshly temple, that is the Theotokos who is shown enthroned in the left section of the image. Accordingly, the personified Wisdom, seated in the front of her house, is a symbolic representation of Christ, the ‘Cause of all and Bestower of Life’, who ‘clothed Himself in a bodily temple’. As Sidorova has pointed out, there are many elements of this mural which distinguish it from the Balkan prototypes of this iconography, which appeared from the late thirteenth century onwards, among others in the Peribleptos church of Ohrid (1295, Fig. 4.7), in Gračanica (1321–2) and Dečani (1335–48).¹⁰ An important innovation of the Novgorod painting is the representation of the Mother of God, the fleshly temple: she is the clue to the riddle of the Proverbs. Another Russian peculiarity is Sophia without wings, in contrast with the Balkan images in which Wisdom is always winged.

⁹ Canon for Holy Thursday, tone six, Canticle One. Translation by Mary and K. Ware, *The Lenten Triodion*, 549. The inscription: [В]с[ѣ]в[ѣ]н[н]а [и] п[р]о[д]а[т]ельна жив[н]у[ю] в[с]ѣ[ч]на пр[е]мудр[ост]ь б[о]ж[ия] созда храмъ свои ѿ прѣтѣла безмужнаго мѣре цркви плотну вложи себе славу прославил х[р]и б[о]гъ нашъ. Vzdornov, *Volotovo*, cat. no. 181.

¹⁰ Sidorova, ‘Volotovskaia freska “premudrost’ sozda sebe dom”’. For the Balkan iconography of the ‘Wisdom has built her house’ (with further bibliography): Brzozowska, ‘Wisdom Has Built Her House’; E. B. Gromova, ‘“Premudrost’ sozda sebe dom” v bogoslovskoi i izobrazitel’noi traditsii XIV v.’, in *Serbsko-russkie literaturnye i kul’turnye svyazi*, ed. L. K. Gavriushin (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2009), 6–23; K. Ch. Felmy, ‘“Die unendliche Weisheit, des Lebens Allgrund und Erschafferin”: Die Ikonen der Weisheit und die Göttliche Liturgie’, in *Die Weisheit baute ihr Haus: Untersuchungen zu hymnischen und didaktischen Ikonen*, ed. E. Haustein-Bartsch and K. Ch. Felmy (München: Deutscher Kunstvtlg, 1999), 43–5; V. Milanović, ‘Starozavetne teme i loza Jesejeva’, in *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana: Građa i studije*, ed. V. J. Đurić and G. Babić (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1995), 213–15; L. M. Evseeva, ‘Dve simvolicheskie kompozitsii v rospisi XIV v. monastyria Zarzma’, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 43 (1982): 134–46; S. Radojčić, ‘La table de la Sagesse dans la littérature et l’art serbes depuis le début du XIIe jusque au début du XIVe siècles’, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 16 (1975): 215–24; L. Prashkov, ‘Khreleva bashnia Rilskogo monastyria i ee stenopis’, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Zarubezhnye svyazi*, ed. O. I. Podobedova and V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 152–5; R. Hamann-MacLean and H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien: vom 11. bis zum frühen 14 Jahrhundert* (Giessen: W. Schmitz, 1963), 72–3; Meyendorff, ‘L’iconographie de la Sagesse Divine’.



Fig. 4.7. 'Wisdom has built her house', fresco in the narthex, the Church of the Theotokos Peribleptos (St Clement), Ohrid, 1294–5.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

The fact that Wisdom has no wings makes this figure identical with the Sophia figures accompanying the Evangelists Matthew, Luke, and Mark in the pendentives of the Volotovo church (Fig. 4.5). The female figures assisting the Evangelists in writing their Gospels, however, are hardly the personifications of 'the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Logos, the Son of God'.¹¹ Unlike the iconography of the 'Wisdom has built her house', where both the context and the inscriptions support the identification with Christ, these images have no Christological references. Furthermore, the Wisdom figures around the Evangelists on the pendentives suggest a subordinate relationship with Christ-Wisdom, represented in the dome which corresponds with medieval symbolism of the Church: 'the dome of church is the Lord's head . . . Christ is the head of the Church; the apostles are the neck; the evangelists are the bosom and the feasts are the girdle.'¹²

These female Wisdom figures are also adopted from Late Byzantine art. From the turn of the fourteenth century, they appear as helpers of the Evangelists or the church fathers on pendentives of churches and in Gospel books (Fig. 4.8).¹³ The earliest extant examples of this iconography are probably those preserved in Prizren, in the church of Theotokos *Ljeviška* (1303).¹⁴ Although the early

¹¹ Vzdornov, *Volotovo*, 38, n. 13.

¹² Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 358–9.

¹³ Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoii Rusi*, 57–9, 268–73, 442–4.

¹⁴ D. Panić and G. Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1975), 118–19.



Fig. 4.8. John Chrysostom with Wisdom and Apostle Paul (*The Source of Divine Wisdom*), fresco in the pendentive, church of the Archangel Michael, Lesnovo, 1349. Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

Balkan images show Wisdom with wings, the majority of these personifications are wingless, similarly to the Rus examples.

It has been frequently emphasized that the female figure in the representations of Evangelists is a personification of the virtue of wisdom, a Christianized muse, an allegorical motive which ‘underlines the wisdom of Christian dogmatical teaching’.¹⁵ Art historians have linked this imagery with different textual sources on Christian perception of wisdom and knowledge.¹⁶ The Russian commentary on the Sophia and its satellite texts, connecting the notion of Christian Wisdom with that of virginity, provide further information on the symbolism of this image. The *Pandects* of Antiochus use the notion of virginity as a synonym for ‘the teachings of the ecclesiastical teachers’, ‘heavenly thoughts’, and the ‘chastity of words’, respectively. The multi-layered clothing metaphor of the *Pandects* is especially relevant: the vestments simultaneously symbolize the Church, Christ’s humanity, and the words of the Holy Scripture, and the ‘prophecies of the divine

¹⁵ Smirnova, ‘Miniatiury dvukh novgorodskikh rukopisei’, 183. Cf. S. Radojčić, ‘Likovi inspirisanih’, in *Tekstovi i freske* (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1965), 9–22.

¹⁶ Radojčić, ‘Likovi inspirisanih’.

inspiration' which bear witness to Christ's dispensation. Moreover, the *Pandects* contain a paraphrase of Proverbs 9:5: the bread and wine appear here as spiritual nutrition, as allegories of knowledge. The link between virginity, true teaching, incarnation and the Church is also emphasized in the commentary itself which connects virginity with the 'words of virtue' and the birth of the Son of God from the Virgin. The female figures inspiring the Evangelists are the virgins, 'the heavenly thoughts', and 'the prophecies of the divine inspiration'. Wisdom is the teaching of the Gospels; but the Church is also the heavenly Wisdom manifested here, on Earth. This female figure is not Christ's hypostatic image, but the created Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22, which was distinguished by Athanasius of Alexandria from the hypostatic Wisdom of Proverbs 9:1.

In fourteenth-century Novgorod painting, therefore, there are two Wisdoms: the wingless figure of Sophia-Christ and the personified Wisdom inspiring the evangelists. Their iconography is intentionally identical, as they express the sophiological antinomy of the Athanasian theology. This antinomy was expressly highlighted in Volotovo where Sophia, who built her house in the narthex, was simultaneously depicted in the pendentives where she inspires the Evangelists. In fourteenth-century Novgorod, where the church 'built by Wisdom' was the Sophia Cathedral itself, the message of the representations of two Sophias in Volotovo must have been evident: Sophia has built her house which is Sophia.

The link between the different sophiological iconographies in Novgorod painting, suggested by Smirnova, is created by the Athanasian Sophiology that distinguishes between two wisdoms which are distinct but united in the Person of Christ. Nevertheless, this Novgorodian interest in anti-Arian Sophiology was primarily driven by ecclesiology, the fact that Novgorod's main church was dedicated to Wisdom. The Sophia commentary has already provided proof of this. Accordingly, one suspects, that the Wisdom figure of the third sophiological subject in the art of Rus, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, is also organically connected with these sophiological iconographies of Novgorod: this Wisdom is also a female or genderless symbolical figure in clothes decorated with 'pearls and all splendour'. Along with these similarities she also has striking distinguishing features: most importantly, the wings and the royal attributes. The wings, according to the Sophia commentary, are ecclesiological bird symbols. Of course, their appearance in the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography may have been inspired by the winged Wisdom-Christ representations which were frequent in the Balkans (Figs 4.7–4.8), but the angel Sophia-Christ is also depicted in the *Kyiv Psalter* (Fig. 4.1). Since the head is inseparable from the body, Christ from his Church, the wings of Wisdom in the *Novgorod Sophia* image also may have an implicit Christological, and, consequently, even a Trinitarian, meaning. Yet, the Novgorod Sophia is not the 'Angel of the Great Counsel' of the Holy Trinity: not only because the commentary undermines this interpretation but also because the iconographic context of the winged Sophia is unequivocally ecclesiological.

The *Novgorod Sophia* Icon as a *Deesis*

The *Royal Deesis* in Novgorod

The structure of *Novgorod Sophia* recalls a *Deesis*: a representation of a group of three figures with Christ in the centre, flanked by the Theotokos and John the Baptist (Fig. 5.1). The idea that the *Novgorod Sophia* is a special type of *Deesis* had already been raised in one of the first scholarly articles about the *Novgorod Sophia* published by Filimonov in 1876.¹ Filimonov compared a later version of the iconography with winged and crowned Virgin and John depicted on the external eastern wall of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral (Cat. 24, Fig. 12.5) with the late Byzantine type of *Deesis* representing Christ and Mary with royal and priestly attributes, mostly called the *Royal Deesis* (other names in scholarly literature include: *Imperial Deesis*, *Heavenly Court*, ‘*The queen stood at your right hand*’).² The perception of the *Novgorod Sophia* as a special *Deesis* or *Royal Deesis* became a recurring element in the subsequent historiography, in spite of some details alien to the *Deesis*. First, the central figure is not Christ, but the winged Sophia with Christ above her head. Furthermore, the Virgin is depicted as holding in her hands a medallion with the figure of Emmanuel, which is difficult to explain in the context of the *Deesis*, as is the lack of the gestures of intercession with open palm in this imagery, which are often perceived as distinguishing elements of the *Deesis* iconography. Moreover, the current interpretation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon as an image of the Trinitarian counsel about the incarnation fundamentally challenges the conceptual link between the two iconographies. In her study on the *Novgorod Sophia*, Sania Gukova acknowledges that the arrangement of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon ‘is

¹ Filimonov, ‘Očerki’, 1874, 6–7.

² For bibliography, historiography and the outline of the iconographic development of the *Royal Deesis*: K. M. Vapheides, ‘Sacerdotium and Imperium in Late Byzantine Art’, *Niš and Byzantium* 18 (2020): 67–75; Á. Kriza, ‘The Royal Deesis—an Anti-Latin Image of Late Byzantine Art’, in *Cross-Cultural Interaction between Byzantium and the West, 1204–1669: Whose Mediterranean Is It Anyway?*, ed. A. Lymberopoulou (London: Routledge, 2018), 272–90; I. Sinkević, ‘Prolegomena for a Study of Royal Entrances in Byzantine Churches: The Case of Marko’s Monastery’, in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and Its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, ed. M. J. Johnson, R. G. Ousterhout, and A. Papalexandrou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 121–42; S. O. Dmitrieva, *Freski khrama Spasa Preobrazheniia na Kovaleve v Novgorode, 1380 goda* (Moscow: Galart, 2011), 98–106; C. Grozdanov, ‘Isus Hristos—Car nad carevite vo živopisot na Ohridskata arhiepiskopija od XV–XVII vek’, in *Živopisot na Ohridskata arhiepiskopija: studii* (Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 2007), 332–57; C. Grozdanov, ‘Isus Hristos Car nad Carevima u živopisu Ohridske arhiepiskopije od XV do XVII veka’, *Zograf* 27 (1998–1999): 151–60.



Fig. 5.1. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom with saints, triptych, second half of the sixteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.*

close to the *Deesis*, but she thinks that this is only a 'formal similarity' as the 'inner meaning of the icon' suggests a symbolism different from the *Deesis*.³

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the precise meaning of both the *Deesis* and the *Royal Deesis* has not yet been fully clarified.⁴ In his 1968 article, Christopher Walter challenged the common view that the *Deesis* is a 'shorthand form of the Last Judgement' expressed in the advocacy of the Theotokos and the Forerunner.⁵ He argued that the intercession-motif was a later development of the original theme of the *Deesis* which, according to him, represented the 'principal witnesses to Christ's divinity' surrounding him in the heavenly court. For Walter, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, where the supplication motif is often missing, is evidence of his statement. This led him to a conclusion, which opposes Gukova's claim: the *Novgorod Sophia* is the 'final version of the *Deesis*'.⁶

The later development of the *Deesis* resulted in the appearance of the so-called *Royal Deesis* in the fourteenth century, which represents Christ as emperor and, subsequently, as hierarch, and the Virgin in imperial insignia. Since the Russian *Sophia*, according to the *Commentary*, also has priestly and royal attributes, the precise interpretation of the *Royal Deesis*, identifying its relation to the *Deesis* and, consequently, to the *Novgorod Sophia*, is of seminal importance in comprehending the *Sophia* iconography. A challenging task will be to explore the link between various symbolic layers (eschatological, intercessional, Christological, testimonial, eucharistic-liturgical, political and ecclesiological) of the *Royal Deesis*, which have led to its diverse, seemingly contradictory and hence obscure, interpretations in historiography.⁷

The significance of the investigation of the iconography of the *Royal Deesis* is supported by the fact that one of the earliest extant *Royal Deesis* icons derives from Novgorod, possibly from the Sophia Cathedral itself (Fig. 5.2).⁸ Some scholars

³ Gukova, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia', 214.

⁴ For the historiography of the *Deesis*: N. V. Kvilidze, 'Deisus', in *PE*, vol. XIV, 2006, 316–19; M. I. Kazamia-Tsernou, *Ιστοριώντας τη 'Δέηση' στις Βυζαντινές Εκκλησίες της Ελλάδος* (Thessaloniki: Εκδόσεις Π. Πουρναρά, 2005); L. A. Shchennikova, 'Deisus v vizantiiskom mire: istoriograficheskii obzor', *Voprosy iskusstvovedeniia*, no. 2–3 (1994): 132–63; A. Weyl Carr, 'Deesis', in *ODB*, vol. I, 1991, 599–600; Ch. Walter, 'Bulletin on the Deësis and the Paraclesis', *Revue des études byzantines* 38 (1980): 261–9; Ch. Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis', *Revue des études byzantines* 26 (1968): 311–36; Th. Bogyay, 'Deesis', in *RBK*, vol. I, 1966, 178–86.

⁵ Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis'. See also: Ch. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London: Variorum Publications, 1982), 181–4; Ch. Walter, 'Further Notes on the Deësis', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 28 (1970): 161–87.

⁶ Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis', 336.

⁷ Sinkevič, 'Prolegomena for a Study of Royal Entrances', 135.

⁸ Makhān'ko, *Pochitanie i sobiranje drevnikh ikon*, 59; E. Ia. Ostashenko, 'Deisus ("Predsta Tsaritsa")', in *Ikony Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlia: XI-nachalo XV veka*, ed. T. V. Tolstaia (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2007), 128–33; E. Ia. Ostashenko, 'Ob ikonograficheskome tipe ikony "Predsta Tsaritsa" Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlia', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Problemy i atributsii*, ed. O. I. Podobedova and V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 175–87; G. V. Popov, 'Tri pamiatnika iuzhnoslavianskoi zhivopisi XIV veka i ikh russkie kopii serediny XVI veka', in *Vizantiia—Iuzhnye slaviane i drevniaia Rus'—Zapadnaia Evropa: iskusstvo i kul'tura: sbornik statei v chest' V. N. Lazareva*, ed. V. N. Grashchenkov (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1973), 353–9; V. G. Putsko, 'Ikona "Predsta Tsaritsa" v Moskovskom Kreml'e', *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 5 (1969): 59–74; V. N. Lazarev, 'Dva novykh pamiatnika russkoi stankovoi zhivopisi XII–XIII vv. (K istorii ikonostasa)', in *Russkaia srednevekovaia zhivopis': stat'i i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 260.



Fig. 5.2. *Royal Deesis*, icon from Novgorod, possibly from the Sophia Cathedral, end of the fourteenth century. Dormition Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow.

suggest that before 1570 it was located in the local tier of the cathedral's main iconostasis together with the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.⁹ After the Muscovite sack of

⁹ E. A. Gordienko, 'Bol'shoi ikonostas Sofiiskogo Sobora (po pis'mennym istochnikam)', *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 2 (1984): 213–14; Popov, 'Tri pamiatnika', 353, 358–9. Tsarevskaya, however, does not mention this icon in her historical survey of this iconostasis: T. Iu. Tsarevskaja, *Velikii Novgorod. Uspenskii (Bol'shoi) Ikonostas Sofiiskogo Sobora* (Tver: IP S.I. Verkhov, 2011). The *Fourth Novgorod Chronicle*, which records the restoration of the main iconostasis Sophia Cathedral in 1528, identifies the location of the *Novgorod Sophia* in the local tier of this iconostasis: PSRL, vol. IV/1/3 1929, 545; see also Cat. 3 and Chapter 11. For the icons of the local tier of this iconostasis, see Chapter 9.



Fig. 5.3. *Royal Deesis*, fresco on the north wall of the naos, Transfiguration church of the Saviour, Kovalyovo near Novgorod, 1380, destroyed between 1941 and 1943.

Novgorod in 1570, the icon was transferred from Novgorod to Moscow, and now it is in the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral.¹⁰ Shortly before this icon was created, a mural had been painted of the same subject in the Transfiguration church in Kovalyovo, near Novgorod, which was destroyed in the Second World War, but the *Royal Deesis* mural has been partially restored (Fig. 5.3).¹¹

¹⁰ Makhan'ko, *Pochitanie i sobiranie drevnikh ikon*, 59.

¹¹ G. P. Gerov, 'O Balkanskikh modeliakh dvukh izobrazhenii v tserkvi Spasa Preobrazheniia na Kovaleve', in *V Sozvezdii L'va: Sbornik statei po drevnerusskomu iskusstvu v chest' L'va Isaakovicha Lifshitsa*, ed. M. A Orlova (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institut iskusstvovedeniia, 2014), 110–27; E. A. Nemykina, 'Kompozitsiia "Predsta Tsaritsa odesnuiu tebe" i gipoteza o novgorodsko-balkanskikh sviaziakh v zhivopisi XIV stoletiiia', *Aktual'nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* 3 (2013): 186–94;



Fig. 5.4. *Royal Deesis* (Heavenly Court), fresco in the north dome of the narthex, Treskavec, 1341–3.

Photo: Ivan Vanev.

The Kovalyovo wall-painting (1380) is the earliest example of this iconography outside the Balkans and only forty years later than the oldest surviving *Royal Deesis* in Treskavec (Prilep) in the territory of the Archbishopric of Ohrid (1341–3; Fig. 5.4).¹² In Treskavec the composition is located in the north dome of the narthex of the Dormition church: in the centre of the dome is Christ depicted in bust as a Byzantine emperor (the inscription calls him ‘Jesus Christ, King of Kings’ cf. Rev 19:16). He is surrounded by a representation of the ‘Heavenly court’, where the *Hetoimasia* and the surrounding angels are flanked by the Theotokos in Byzantine imperial vestments and the heavily damaged figure of King David in a gesture of supplication—an arrangement typical of Cypriot

Dmitrieva, *Freski khrama Spasa Preobrazheniia na Kovalëve v Novgorode, 1380 Goda*, 98–106; A. P. Grekov, *Freski tserkvi Spasa Preobrazheniia na Kovaleve* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987); V. N. Lazarev, ‘Kovalevskiaia rospis’ i problema iuzhnoslavianskikh sviazei v russkoi zhivopisi XIV veka’, in *Russkaia srednevekovaiia zhivopis’: stat’i i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 254–60. The restoration was led by Alexandr Grekov and Valentina Grekova: Grekov, *Freski tserkvi Spasa Preobrazheniia na Kovaleve*, 40, Figs 25, 27, 106.

¹² Vapheïades, ‘Sacerdotium and Imperium in Late Byzantine Art’, 67–9; D. Ćorgïjević, ‘Prilog kon proučavanjata na kultot na svetite petozarnici i idejnata programa vo severnata kupola na manastirot Treskavec’, *Patrimonium* 7 (2014): 121–32; M. Gligorijević-Maksimović, ‘Slikarstvo XIV veka u manastiru Treskavcu’, *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 42 (2005): 109–14; S. Smolčić-Makuljević, ‘Carski deisis i nebeski dvor u slikarstvu XIV veka manastira Treskavac: Ikonografski program severne kupole priprate crkve Bogorodičnog uspenja’, in *Treća jugoslovenska konferencija vizantologa: Kruševac 10–13. Maj 2000*, ed. L. Maksimović, N. Radošević, and E. Radulović (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU, 2002), 463–72.



Fig. 5.5. *Royal Deesis*, fresco on the north wall of the naos, Marko's Monastery, 1376–7. Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

church domes (see chapter 9).¹³ On the tambour, warriors and martyrs are represented, also as intercessors. The Treskavec fresco was followed by various examples with the traditional linear *Deesis* scheme in fourteenth-century Balkan painting, for example, in Marko's St Demetrios Monastery (1376–7; Fig. 5.5), in Kastoria, St Athanasius (1384), in the miniature of the *Serbian Psalter* (ca. 1370–90; Fig. 5.6), as well as in a fourteenth-century icon from Veroia.¹⁴ Although in the latter two, King David balances the Theotokos, John the Baptist

¹³ For the Cypriot church dome decorations with *Deesis* flanking a *Hetoimasia*: T. Papamastorakis, *O Diákosmos tou Troúλου των Ναών της Παλαιολόγειας Περιόδου στη Βαλκανική Χερσόνησο και την Κύπρο* (Athens: *H en Athinaís Αρχαιολογική Εταιρεία*, 2001), 84–97; A. Papageorghiou, 'The Paintings in the Dome of the Church of the Panagia Chryseleousa, Strovolos', in *Medieval Cyprus: Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, ed. N. P. Ševčenko and Ch. F. Moss (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 147–54; A. Weyl Carr, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered: The Thirteenth-Century Murals of Lysi, Cyprus* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 50, 53; T. Velmans, 'Quelques programmes iconographiques de coupoles chypriotes du XIIIe au XVe siècle', *Cahiers archéologiques* 32 (1984): 137–62.

¹⁴ For the *Royal Deesis* fresco of the Marko's Monastery: M. Tomić-Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira* (Belgrade: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2019), 392–426; Sinkević, 'Prolegomena for a Study of Royal Entrances'; C. Grozdanov, 'Iz ikonografije Markovog manastira', *Zograf* 11 (1980): 83–93; L. Mirković, 'Dali se freske Markovog manastira mogu tumaciti žitijem sv. Vasilija Novog', *Starinar* 12 (1961): 77–90; S. Radojčić, 'Freske Markovog manastira i život sv. Vasilija Novog', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 4 (1956): 215–27. For the *Serbian Psalter* (München, BSB, Cod. Slav. 4, f. 58v): H. Beltjng and S. Dufrenne, eds., *Der Serbische Psalter: Faksimile-Ausgabe des Cod. Slav. 4 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1978), 203–4. For the *Royal Deesis* of the St Athanasius Mouzakis church in Kastoria: N. Pazaras, 'Οι Τοιχογραφίες του ναού του Αγίου Αθανασίου του Μουζιάκη και η ένταξή τους στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική της Καστοριάς και της Ευρύτερης Περιοχής (Καστοριά, Μ. Μακεδονία, Β. Ήπειρος)' (PhD dissertation, Thessaloniki, Aristotelian University, 2013), 290–301, pl. 92–3; L. Grigoriadou, 'L'image de la Déesis Royale dans une fresque du XIVe siècle à Castoria', in *Actes du XIVe congrès international des études byzantines. Bucarest, 6–12 septembre, 1971*, ed. M. Berza and E. Stănescu, vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii socialiste România, 1975), 47–52. For the icon from Veroia: Th. Papazotos, *Η Βέροια και οι ναοί της, 11ος–18ος αι.: ιστορική και αρχαιολογική σπουδή των μνημείων της πόλης*. (Athens: Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων και Απαλλοτριώσεων, 1994), 62–3, pl. 76.



Fig. 5.6. *Royal Deesis*, miniature to Psalm 44:10–11, Serbian Psalter, fourteenth century. Cod. Slav. 4, f. 58v, BSB.

Credit: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

became the protagonist of the subsequent *Royal Deesis* images which gained high popularity in Orthodox painting into the nineteenth century.¹⁵

In Rus, the early history of the *Royal Deesis* iconography seems to be connected with Novgorod; other than the aforementioned two examples, two icons, a carved cross and a stone icon have survived, along with written sources which bear witness to the *Royal Deesis* representations in Novgorod before the sixteenth century.¹⁶ The fifteenth-century *Royal Deesis* icon loosely and an icon from 1559 (Fig. 5.7) strictly follow the iconography of the fourteenth-century icon.¹⁷

¹⁵ For the dissemination of the *Royal Deesis* in the different Byzantine Orthodox regions (with further bibliography): Makhan'ko, *Pochitanie i sobranie drevnikh ikon*, 180–92; Pazaras, 'Οι Τοιχογραφίες του ναού του Αγίου Αθανασίου του Μουζάκη', 290–301; E. Negrău, 'Deësis in the Romanian Painting of the 14th–18th Centuries: Themes and Meanings', *Revista Teologică* 93, no. 2 (2011): 64–81; Kazamia-Tsernou, *Ιστορώντας τη Δέηση*, 197–202, 215–17; C. Grozdanov, *Živopisot na Ohridskata arhiepiskopija: studii* (Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 2007), 333–77.

¹⁶ Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Živopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 293–4; Popov, 'Tri pamiatnika', 353–9.

¹⁷ For the fifteenth-century *Royal Deesis* icon of the Tretyakov Gallery (no. 2): *Sofia* 2000, 334–5; *Sophia* 1999, 364–5. For the 1559 *Royal Deesis* icon (Russian State Museum, no. DRZh-2060): Vilinbakhova et al., *Drevlekhranilishche pamiatnikov*, 200; Grierson, *Gates of Mystery*, 134–5.



Fig. 5.7. *Royal Deesis*, icon from Novgorod, 1559.

Credit: State Russian Museum, St Petersburg.

Although two isolated *Royal Deesis* examples have survived outside Novgorod from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Russian proliferation of the iconography began only in the mid-sixteenth century, shortly before the transfer of the fourteenth-century icon to Moscow in 1570.¹⁸ Thus, the early Novgorod images will serve as the starting point of the investigation of a possible link between the *Royal Deesis* and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

The Kovalyovo wall-painting (Fig. 5.3) and the large icon (203 × 108 cm; Fig. 5.2) are apparently not unrelated to each other and, most probably, both were painted by Balkan and not Rus painters. A singular feature of these two images is that they combine Christ's imperial and episcopal attributes. The earlier or contemporary *Royal Deesis* representations depict Christ only as emperor, while Christ as hierarch, another innovation of fourteenth-century Byzantine painting, was previously depicted only in independent or liturgical

¹⁸ On the Epitaphios of Elena Vereiskaia (1466), and on the early sixteenth-century carved so-called Kilikiev cross from the Savior-Prilutskii Monastery, cf. Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 293–4.

representations.¹⁹ The Novgorod Kovalyovo fresco and the Novgorod icon display Christ as both: the throne, the Byzantine imperial crown decorated with *pendilia* (mitre), the *loros* (girdle), the sceptre and the footstool are imperial insignia, whilst the *sakkos* (episcopal garment) with a multi-layered cross pattern (*polystavrion*), the staff (*pateritsa*), and the great omophorion are archiepiscopal symbols.²⁰ The Theotokos on his right side is depicted in the female counterpart of Christ's imperial vestments, with a sceptre and a Byzantine imperial crown, resting on an ornamented veil. John the Baptist was not represented in the Kovalyovo fresco, whereas in the icon he is depicted at the left of the King, in his usual robes, with a scroll in his hand. There is no supplication motif in either images, but the Virgin and John the Forerunner incline their heads towards Christ. Furthermore, in the icon, the inscription on John's scroll is also visible. This text provides early information about the symbolism of not only the *Royal Deesis* but also the *Deesis* iconography itself.

Deesis, The Image of the Church

Christopher Walter aimed to collect all the relevant visual and textual evidence for the history of the *Deesis*, this fundamental image of Byzantine art which originated in the sixth century. Neither Walter's researches, however, nor other art-historical studies on the *Deesis* explored the possible biblical sources of the iconography. The fourteenth-century inscription in John Baptist's scroll in the Novgorod *Royal Deesis* icon (Fig. 5.2) sheds light on this lacuna. Unusually, John holds his own words here that make clear his identity: 'He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice' (John 3:29).²¹

This verse has three protagonists, in common with the *Deesis*: the Bridegroom, the Bride and the friend of the Bridegroom. John claims, that Christ is the Bridegroom (Christ also called himself the Bridegroom in Matt 9:15, Mark 2:19–20, and Luke 5:34–5) and John is his friend. As we have seen earlier, the Letter to the Ephesians, which highlights the ecclesiological aspect of the nuptial image utilized by John the Baptist, reveals that the Bride is the Church here: 'For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..., that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle' (Eph 5:23–7). Simultaneously,

¹⁹ M. Tomić-Đurić, 'To Picture and to Perform: The Image of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Markov Manastir, II', *Zograf* 39 (2015): 129–34; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 214–21. For the development of Byzantine liturgical iconographies, see Chapter 7.

²⁰ Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 13–45, 136–48.

²¹ Ostashenko, 'Deisus ("Predsta Tsaritsa")', 131.

Revelation uncovers the Eucharistic-Eschatological significance of the Bride metaphor which is applicable to the members of the Church, to the Christian souls:

‘The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints’, adding that ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ (Rev 19:7–9).

The Old Testament roots of biblical nuptial imagery has already been discussed in Chapter 2: it is based on the bridal images of the Song of Songs and Psalm 44. Significantly, in common with Rev 19:7–9, Psalm 44 combines the nuptial and clothing metaphors when it writes about the queen’s ‘apparel interwoven with gold’ to the right of the royal Bridegroom (Ps 44:10). The verse appears as an inscription in the 1559 replica of the Novgorod *Royal Deesis* icon, but it is plausible that it was also present in the original image.²²

The intertwined nuptial and clothing imagery gain fundamental importance in the New Testament. Christ compares the heavenly kingdom with the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14). The king invites the guests for his banquet, but he ejects those who arrived without wedding garments: “‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 22:12–13). This eschatological aspect of the image of spiritual wedding appears also in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt 25:1–13). Finally, Christ himself participated in the wedding banquet in Cana, where he turned the water into wine, the symbol of the Eucharist, through Mary’s intercession (John 2:1–11). Patristic exegesis, including the anonymous *Turtledove* sermon discussed in Chapter 2 highlights the ecclesiological symbolism of this narrative: the wedding in Cana is an allegory of the banquet of Ecclesia. This homily describes the spiritual wedding of the Church where John the Baptist, the friend of the Bridegroom introduces the Bridegroom to the Church-turtledove-bride: ‘Behold the Lamb of God’ (John 1:29) and the guests are the saints and the prophets who offer their prophecies as wedding gifts to the Bridegroom.

The inscription on John’s scroll in the Novgorod *Royal Deesis* icon, therefore, reveals the nuptial symbolism of the three-figure arrangement of the *Deesis*. Christ is the Bridegroom, John the Baptist is the friend of the Bridegroom and the Theotokos appears here as the Bride, the symbol of the Church. This identification between the biblical Bride-Church and the Mother of God developed gradually in early patristic literature: it was a distinguishing feature of Western and Syriac

²² Ostashenko, 131.

theological traditions.²³ For Ambrose of Milan (†397), through her virginal maternity, Mary is a symbol (type) of the Church.²⁴ Greek theologians were less explicit in their formulations regarding the ecclesiological aspect of Mariology. Greek Marian theology, however, underwent a significant development after the Council of Ephesus (431) which declared that the Virgin Mary contained the God in her womb, therefore she must be called the Mother of God. After the fifth century, however, not only Greek homiletical literature, but also liturgical poetry applied the rich bridal imagery of the Bible directly to the Mother of God. This process was intertwined with the appearance of Marian feast-days in the Church calendar.²⁵ As will be argued below (in Chapters 6 and 8), the simultaneous interpretation of the house built by Wisdom-Christ (Prov 9:1) as the Church and the Theotokos was one of the most important contact points between Mariology and ecclesiology.

Thus, the exegesis of John 3:29 is the clue to the interpretation of the *Deesis*. As a 'Trimorphon', it is the allegorical image of the spiritual wedding of the Church which combines different motifs: (1) the testimony-motif (the Forerunner is the messenger and first witness to Christ's incarnation who 'rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice'); (2) the eschatological motif (the Royal Bridegroom orders the casting away from the banquet whoever is unworthy); (3) the motif of intercession (the Theotokos intercedes in Cana) and (4) the eucharistic-liturgical motif (the Royal Wedding feast is the Eucharist: the Last Supper in the historical past, the Divine Liturgy in the present and the Lamb's Supper in the eschatological future).

The nuptial symbolism of John 3:29 links its exegesis with that of other nuptial images of the Bible, including the ecclesiological Psalm 44 which is the focal point of the aforementioned *Turtledove* homily. In Rus, however, there was another highly popular ecclesiological sermon on this Psalm, written by John Chrysostom himself and entitled *Sermon on 'The queen stood at your right hand'*.²⁶ The

²³ For the roots of Western Marian ecclesiology (with further bibliography): I. Flor, *Glaube und Macht: Die mittelalterliche Bildsymbolik der trinitarischen Marienkrönung* (Graz: Selbstverlag des Instituts für Geschichte der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 2007), 13–16; M.-L. Thérél, *Le triomphe de la Vierge-Église: à l'origine du décor du portail occidental de Notre-Dame de Senlis* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984), 78–148; U. Nilgen, 'Maria Regina—Ein politischer Kultbildtypus?', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 19 (1981): 22–3; K. Delahaye, *Ecclesia Mater chez les pères des trois premiers siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 1964); Y. Congar, 'Marie et l'église dans la pensée patristique', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 38 (1954): 3–38. For Syriac tradition and St Ephrem: R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, [Rev. ed.] (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 131–58.

²⁴ *Expositio Euangelii Secundum Lucam (Exposition of Luke)*, II, 57; CCL 14, 33, 102–6.

²⁵ M. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 19–28.

²⁶ Greek original: *Homilia de capto Eutropio*, CPG 4528; PG 52, 395–414; English translation: NPNE-1, IX, 253–65; for the text: A. Cameron, 'A Misidentified Homily of Chrysostom', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 34–48. Slavonic version: *Slovo: Predsta Tsaritsa odesnuui tebe*; edition: VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1132–161; 1854–65.

Slavonic translation of the homily—well known amongst patristic scholars, but unknown to art historians—was part of the same collection of Chrysostomian homilies (*Zlatostrui*), as the *Turtledove* homily.²⁷ This homily gives a concise summary of Christian ecclesiological symbolism which is of crucial importance in comprehending Byzantine and Post-Byzantine ecclesiological iconography which becomes more and more complex over the centuries.

The leitmotif of this text is the opposition between fornication and virginity, the symbolic images of ‘our human nature’ (harlot) and the Church (virgin). Through his incarnation, asserts Chrysostom, Christ ‘converted the harlot into a virgin’—redeemed the fallen humanity and unified it with his body, that is with the Church: “I carry you in myself who am the Lord of Heaven. The shepherd carries you and the wolf no longer comes . . . “I have planted you in myself.” therefore He [Christ] says “I am the root, you are the branches (cf. John 15: 5).”²⁸ Chrysostom also utilizes the image of Proverbs 9:1: Wisdom’s temple is humanity and the Church, whilst the Marian interpretation is still only implied in this homily: ‘He [Christ] is conceived in the womb, he increases little by little . . . The temple is founded and the God dwells therein.’²⁹

John describes the union of the human and divine natures through nuptial images: Christ espoused the harlot and became her husband, he made her ‘young, not having spot or wrinkle’ (Eph 5:27; cf. Song 4:7). As Bridegroom, he gave her betrothal gifts: ‘forgiveness of sins, remission of punishment, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, the body of the Lord, the divine, spiritual Table, the resurrection of the dead’.³⁰ Now, it is the renewed human nature, the virgin and the queen, that is the Church, who stands in bridal vestments ‘apparel interwoven with gold’ on the right hand of the King. John Chrysostom gives a very detailed explanation of this garment ‘interwoven with gold’ which is understood by him—in common with Andrew of Crete, the Sophia commentary and whole patristic literature—as being interwoven with morals. According to John Chrysostom, Christ as Bridegroom divided the dowry of the bride ‘into two portions consisting of things present and things to come’.³¹ The things to come constitute the promise of Kingdom, while the things present are described as follows:

²⁷ Miltenov, *Zlatostrui: Starobŭlgarski khomiletichen svod, sŭzdaden po initsiativa na bulgarskiia Tsar Simeon*, 113.

²⁸ *De capto Eutropio*, 11; VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1148; Translation by W. R. W. Stephens, in NPNF-1, IX, 259.

²⁹ *De capto Eutropio*, 11; VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1147; Translation by W. R. W. Stephens, in NPNF-1, IX, 259.

³⁰ *De capto Eutropio*, 15; VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1156; Translation by W. R. W. Stephens, in NPNF-1, IX, 263.

³¹ *De capto Eutropio*, 16; VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1157; Translation by W. R. W. Stephens, in NPNF-1, IX, 263.

For he [Christ] espoused her [the Church] as a wife, he loves her as a daughter, he provides for her as a handmaid, he guards her as a virgin, He fences her round like a garden, and cherishes her like a member: as a head he provides for her, as a root he causes her to grow, as a shepherd he feeds her, as a bridegroom he weds her, as a propitiation He pardons her, as a sheep he is sacrificed, as a bridegroom He preserves her in beauty, as a husband he provides for her support. Many are the meanings in order that we may enjoy a part if it be but a small part of the divine economy of grace.³²

First, the Bridegroom is the King, ‘the Lord of the Kingdom’. Furthermore, he is the root, the head and he is the shepherd. Nonetheless, he is not only the shepherd of the Church, but also the sheep who is sacrificed. The idea that Christ is the shepherd and the sheep at the same time appears in the famous priestly prayer of the Byzantine liturgy (the so-called *Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn*): ‘Allow these gifts [of the Eucharist, i.e. the bread and wine] to be offered to you by me, your unworthy servant. For you are the one who offers and is offered, who accepts and is distributed, Christ our God.’³³ Although it is believed that this prayer was not part of the original Chrysostom liturgy, most common in Byzantine Orthodox Church, John’s ecclesiological homily conveys a similar perception of the Eucharist.

The Homily *On ‘The queen stood at your right hand’*, therefore, sheds light on the liturgical and Eucharistic aspect of the *Deesis*, the image of the spiritual wedding of the Church. It is, therefore, not coincidental that the Sophia commentary also refers to the central part of the Liturgy, the intercession prayer of the Anaphora which is usually referred to as *δέησις* in Byzantine texts.³⁴ This prayer belongs to the oldest layer of the Byzantine Liturgy and following its position—it is recited immediately after the *Epiclesis* when the consecrated gifts are still present on the altar—it has the highest liturgical significance. As John Chrysostom wrote elsewhere, these prayers are read in the presence of the ‘common Purifier of the oikoumene’, ‘this is why we confidently pray for the whole world at that time, and name them together with martyrs, confessors, priests. For we are all one body, even if some members are more glorious than others, and it is possible from every source . . . to gather pardon.’³⁵

³² *De capto Eutropio*, 15; VMCh, vol. VIII: 13–15 November (1899), 1155; Translation by W. R. W. Stephens, in NPNF-1, IX, 262.

³³ R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1975), 119–43.

³⁴ Walter, ‘Two Notes on the Deësis’, 319; G. W. H. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 334. See Chapter 2.

³⁵ John Chrysostom, *In 1 Cor. hom.* 41.4–5. PG 61, 361. Translation by R. F. Taft: Taft, ‘Praying to or for the Saints? A Note on the Sanctoral Intercessions Commemorations in the Anaphora: History and Theology’, 448.

In the Slavonic liturgical commentary (*Tolkovaia Sluzhba*), this union is called the 'virginal life' in Christ: it is the criterion of the saints' intercession for living and dead, as in Christ's body they are in communion with all members of the Church. This idea is emphasized by the unusual wording of the anaphoral intercession prayer, as it uses the same preposition 'for' (ὕπερ) in all instances, i.e. the sacrifice is offered not only for the living and dead, but also for the saints, including the Theotokos and the Prodrome.³⁶ Accordingly, the Slavonic liturgical commentary interprets the subdeacon's response 'for each and all' as an invocation addressed to all Christians to imitate the Theotokos's virginal life.³⁷ Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the same commentary compared the celebrating bishop with John the Baptist which analogy was highlighted in some versions of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon (Figs 0.4, 11.5, 11.6, 12.5, 12.6) as well as in a few fifteenth-century *Deesis* and *Royal Deesis* icons from Rus, showing John with blessing right hand.³⁸ Likewise, the gesture of supplication of the flanking Mother of God and John towards the enthroned Christ-Lamb, frequent in *Deesis* images, conveys not only intercessory, testimonial, but also liturgical, meaning, by recalling the prayer of the celebrating priests over the Gifts of the Eucharist, placed on the altar.

These observations, therefore, challenge Christopher Walter's hypothesis about the transformation of the 'Trimorphon' from a visionary scene into an apocalyptic image that visualizes the intercession of the saints. The Byzantine liturgy in its earliest (at least fourth-century) form reveals that the Virgin's and the Forerunner's role as 'witnesses of Christ's Divinity' and as intercessors are inseparable. The *Deesis* as an ecclesiological image of the spiritual wedding is at the same time the allegorical image of the earthly realization of this marriage, i.e. the Eucharistic sacrifice and its peak-point, the anaphoral intercession prayer—δέησις in Greek and деисусъ in Slavonic. Consequently, one can hardly agree with Walter's conclusion that the Russian name of the 'Trimorphon' image—Деисус/Deesis—which was introduced into scholarship by Russian art historians in the nineteenth century and is common today, is misleading.³⁹ In fact, this name precisely expresses the meaning of this image. Although the different *Deesis* compositions may highlight different aspects of this iconography (testimonial, intercessional, eschatological, eucharistic), but ultimately, they all visualize the union between the body and the head—'the marriage supper of the Lamb' (Rev 19:9).

³⁶ Taft 1996. ³⁷ See Chapter 2.

³⁸ See Chapter 2, Chapter 11, and the Catalogue. See also the fifteenth-century *Royal Deesis* icon of the Tretyakov Gallery (GTG, no. 2; *Sofia* 2000, 334–5; *Sophia* 1999, 364–5).

³⁹ Walter has argued that 'the firm univocal definition of δέησις is impossible', therefore *Deesis*, the medieval Russian name of the iconography, the Greek equivalent of which does not appear in Byzantine representations, is misleading: Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis', 312–24. Cf. N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon*, trans. E. H. Minns (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 30; A. I. Kirpichnikov, 'Deisus na vostoke i zapade i ego literaturnye paralleli', *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 11 (1893): 1–26.

The liturgical importance of the *Deesis* is also supported by the fact that a striking number of *Deesis* representations appears in direct connection with the Eucharist: on liturgical objects, altar furnishings, priestly vestments, in apse decorations and, from the eleventh century onwards, in the images of the sanctuary barriers.⁴⁰ One of the oldest, sixth-century, not yet fully developed *Deesis* appears on the triumphal arch of the Transfiguration church of Sinai St Catherine's monastery (Fig. 9.8).⁴¹ In the sixth- or seventh-century apse fresco in the Panagia Drosiani church at Moni on Naxos, Christ is flanked by the Virgin on the right, but on the left, John the Baptist in supplication is accompanied by the allegorical figure of the crowned Ecclesia. This royal female figure on the left of Christ underpins the ecclesiological meaning of the *Deesis* (Fig. 5.8).⁴² In medieval Cappadocia and Georgia, the *Deesis* was a particularly common apse decoration.⁴³ Very few Byzantine liturgical vessels have survived, but the ninth-century *Legend of Stephen the Younger* is an early written source which describes a paten with the figures of Christ, the Mother of God and John the Baptist.⁴⁴

The *Deesis* iconography in Rus is also closely related to the altar.⁴⁵ In the eleventh-century Sophia cathedral of Kyiv, the mosaic *Deesis* over the entrance of the apse is

⁴⁰ For the history of Byzantine sanctuary barrier and its link to the *Deesis* iconography (with further bibliography): I. L. Buseva-Davydova and S. S. Vaneian, 'Ikonostas', in *PE*, vol. XXII, 2010, 65–71; S. Kalopissi-Verti, 'The Proskynetaria of the Templon and Narthex: Form, Imagery, Spatial Connections, and Reception', in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sh. E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), 107–34; A. M. Lidov, 'Ikonostas: Itogi i perspektivy issledovaniia', in *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhdenie-razvitiie-simvolika*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000), 11–32; A. M. Lidov, ed., 'Vizantiiskii antependium: O simvolicheskom prototipe vyssokogo ikonostasa', in *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhdenie-razvitiie-simvolika* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000), 161–206; Shchennikova, 'Deisus v vizantiiskom mire'; Ch. Walter, 'The Origins of Iconostasis', *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1971): 251–67; Lazarev, 'Dva novykh pamiatnika'. For the *Deesis* on liturgical textiles: Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 64–79.

⁴¹ Another very early, but heavily restored *Deesis* has been preserved in the apse mosaics of San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome. Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis', 331.

⁴² M. Lidova, 'Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia: The Icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere in the Early Byzantine Context', *IKON* 9 (2016): 120.

⁴³ C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1991), 336; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 1982, 183; T. Velmans, 'L'image de la Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin, première partie: l'abside', *Cahiers archéologiques* 29 (1980–1981): 47–102; N. Thierry, 'À propos des peintures d'Ayvah köy (Cappadoce). Les programmes absidaux à trois registres avec déisis, en Cappadoce et en Géorgie', *Zograf* 5 (1974): 5–22. For the *Deesis* in the apses of Greek churches (typically, in basilicas): A. G. Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού Βήματος των μεσοβυζαντινών ναών της Ελλάδας (843–1204)* (Athens: Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, 2001), 96–112; Kazamia-Tsernou, *Ιστορώντας τη Δέηση*, 55–115; K. M. Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting in Greece* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991), 17–18.

⁴⁴ Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deësis', 324 (PG 100, 1144); for a twelfth-century Byzantine Eucharistic bowl with *Deesis*: Iu. A. Piatnitskii, ed., *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century* (London: Saint Catherine Foundation in association with the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, 2000), 95–6.

⁴⁵ For the history of the *Deesis* in Rus: M. Filevych, 'Iconography and Theology of the *Deesis* Image in Eastern Slavic Art from Its Origins until the 15th Century' (PhD dissertation, Innsbruck, Leopold-Franzens-Universität, 2009).



Fig. 5.8. Fresco decoration in the apse, church of the Panagia Drosiani, Moni, Naxos, sixth or seventh century.

Photo: Alexei Lidov.



Fig. 5.9. *Deesis*, icon from Vladimir-Suzdal, thirteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

the integral part of the sanctuary decoration (Fig. 7.3).⁴⁶ The monumental *Deesis* in the apse of the Pskov Mirozh monastery's Transfiguration church (ca. 1150; Fig. 9.5) and the idiosyncratic *Deesis* at the Saviour church on the Nereditsa hill in Novgorod (1199; Fig. 9.1) will be discussed in Chapter 9.⁴⁷ The early thirteenth-century *Deesis* icon from Vladimir-Suzdal arguably constituted part of a sanctuary barrier (Fig. 5.9).⁴⁸ The *Deesis* image was an almost obligatory element of Eucharistic vessels in Rus from the earliest times, as the chalice from Pereslavl Zalesky (thirteenth century) and that of the Novgorod archbishop Moisei (1329) attest: their bowls display a five-figured *Deesis* (Christ, Theotokos, John the Baptist, and two angels) which is accompanied by a patronal saint.⁴⁹ An outstanding object is the so-called *Grand Jerusalem* or *Grand Zion* of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral from the twelfth century which is a church-shaped silver tabernacle for the consecrated bread. The dome is decorated with the above-mentioned five-plus-one *Deesis*-formula.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ For a bibliography on the apse decoration of Kyiv Sophia cathedral, see Chapter 7.

⁴⁷ For the *Deesis* of the Nereditsa church: N. G. Porfiridov, 'K voprosu o zaprestol'nom Deisuse Nereditskoi tserkvi', in *Tserkov' Spasa na Nereditse: ot Vizantii k Rusi*, ed. O. E. Etingof (Moscow: Indrik, 2005), 235–42; P. L. Gusev, 'Zagadochnyi deisis v Spaso-Nereditskoi tserkvi', in *Tserkov' Spasa na Nereditse: ot Vizantii k Rusi*, ed. O. E. Etingof (Moscow: Indrik, 2005), 243–6.

⁴⁸ L. Nersesyan et al., eds., *Holy Russia* (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2011), 96–7; J. Durand, D. Giovannoni, and I. Rapti, eds., *Sainte Russie: L'art russe des origines à Pierre Le Grand* (Paris: Somogy, Musée du Louvre, 2010), 200–1; Lazarev, 'Dva novykh pamiatnika'.

⁴⁹ For the chalice from Pereslavl Zalesky (MMK, no. MR-1024): 'Potir. Nachalo XIII v.', accessed 23 June 2020, <http://imagesgallery.kreml.ru:8782/entity/OBJECT/41947>; I. A. Sterligova, "'Potir Iuriiia Dolgorukogo" iz Oruzheinoi Palaty Moskovskogo Kremliá', *Materialy i issledovaniia* 9 (1993): 5–24. For the chalice of the Novgorod archbishop Moisei (1329; MMK, no. DK-17): 'Potir. 1329', accessed 23 June 2020, <http://imagesgallery.kreml.ru:8782/entity/OBJECT/41964>; I. A. Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda: khudozhestvennyi metall XI–XV veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1996), 126–7. For further examples: I. A. Sterligova and A. A. Turilov, 'Zolotoi potir iz Blagoveshchenskogo sobora kak pamiatnik iskusstva i epigrafiki', in *Moskovskii Krem' XV stoletii*, ed. L. A. Beliaev and I. A. Vorotnikova, vol. I: *Drevnie sviatyni i istoricheskie pamiatniki* (Moscow: Art-Volkhonka, 2011), 428–39.

⁵⁰ NGM, no. KP 1354, DRM-366. 'Bol'shoi sion (Bol'shoi ierusalim)', accessed 23 June 2020, <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/100422>; Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, 116–23.



Fig. 5.10. Orthodox priest performing the Proskomedia.

Photo: Gáspár Parlagi.

The *Deesis* also frequently appears on liturgical textiles, for example in the *Aer*, executed in Moscow in 1389.⁵¹

Moreover, there is a striking coincidence in time between the development of Byzantine Liturgy and that of the *Deesis* iconography: it is the fourteenth century when the *Royal Deesis* iconography appears and when the Prothesis rite or Proskomedia, the liturgical preparation of bread and wine before the Liturgy, after a centuries-long development, is thought to reach its final form.⁵² During the Proskomedia, the priest cuts the central sealed square portion, the Lamb or *Amnos*, from the eucharistic bread (prosphora) with a liturgical knife, called lance or spear. Following the *Amnos*, he excises the bread particles for the Theotokos and the saints, the living and the dead, respectively (Figs 5.10–5.11). The Psalm quotations in the later versions of the Proskomedia are identical with those which appear on the *Royal Deesis* images (Ps 44:10; 92:1). As the liturgist Archimandrite Cyprian Kern has observed, the intercession prayer of the Anaphora ‘is the prototype of the commemorations of the Proskomedia, both in general terms and in details’.⁵³

In contrast with the *Deesis*, in the *Royal Deesis* images the liturgical references appear explicitly. In Treskavec (Fig. 5.4), the bust of the imperial Christ in the dome is surrounded by angels one of which appears as a deacon. The inscription

⁵¹ GIM, no. 15494 RB-1. Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 318–19.

⁵² For the liturgical aspect of the *Deesis*: Shchennikova, ‘Deisus v vizantiiskom mire:’, esp. 155–8.

⁵³ Kiprian (Kern), *Evkharistiia*, 159.

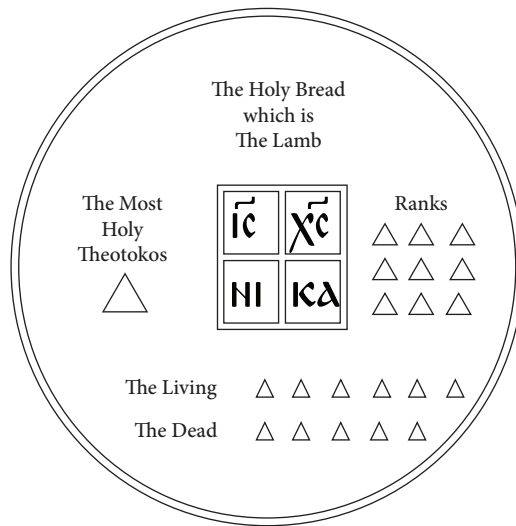


Fig. 5.11. The particles of the prosphora on the paten. Line drawing based on a contemporary Orthodox liturgical book.

'Jesus Christ, King of Kings' (cf. Rev 19:16) highlights the Eucharistic significance of the image by evoking the Cherubic Hymn of the Great Saturday: 'For the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, draws near to be sacrificed and given as food to the faithful.'⁵⁴ Here the imperial vestments of the Theotokos have evident allusions to the priestly garments: her mantle follows the priestly *phelonion* (bell-shaped outer liturgical garment) and her *loros* (long strip or sash) the *epitrachelion* (liturgical scarf worn around the neck of priests).⁵⁵ These similarities create a symbolical link between the *Royal Deesis* image and the Hierarchical Liturgy where the bishop personifies Christ and the con-celebrant priests represent the Apostles. In Marko's Monastery (Fig. 5.5), the *Royal Deesis* was relocated to the north wall of the naos, in close proximity to the sanctuary: to the north-eastern apsed chamber, the prothesis where the Proskomedia takes place (the Prothesis rite celebrated by the Church Fathers is visualized on the wall), and to the altar itself, where Christ is depicted as Hierarch serving the Heavenly Liturgy (see also Chapter 7).⁵⁶

The *Royal Deesis* in Kovalyovo (Fig. 5.3) integrated Christ's royal and sacerdotal attributes and Christ appeared here not only as 'King of Kings', the bridegroom of the queen 'in apparel interwoven with gold' (Ps 44:11) but also as 'priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' (Ps 109:4). This synthesis is expressed by the three inscriptions in the 1559 replica of the early Novgorod *Royal Deesis* icon

⁵⁴ Mary and K. Ware, *The Lenten Triodion*, 659.

⁵⁵ Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 9–13.

⁵⁶ For the liturgical frescoes of Marko's monastery: M. Tomić-Đurić, 'To Picture and to Perform: The Image of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Markov Manastir, I', *Zograf* 38 (2014): 123–41; Tomić-Đurić, 'To Picture and to Perform, II', 2015.

(Fig. 5.7) which complemented the ecclesiological verse of John 3:29 on John the Baptist's scroll with the quotations from Psalm 44 and 109, respectively. The fourteenth-century Novgorod *Royal Deesis* images marked the final phase of an iconographic development that was driven by the demand to highlight those aspects of the *Deesis*, the allegorical image of the Church, which were only alluded to, but not clearly articulated there: an eschatological meaning emphasized by the royal garments; a liturgical message which is highlighted by the sacerdotal vestments and an intertwined soteriological-Christological aspect reinforced by the presence of Christ's omophorion and by the Virgin's garment interwoven with gold.⁵⁷ The question, however, remains unanswered as to why the hidden symbolism of the traditional *Deesis* proved unsatisfactory in the fourteenth century.

The Coronation of the Virgin and Anti-Greek Visual Polemics in the West

The greatest iconographic innovation of the *Royal Deesis* iconography is the representation of the vestments: instead of the Pantokrator, the King Christ is depicted here, flanked by the royal Theotokos and John the Baptist. Surprisingly, prototypes of the explicit secular imperial symbolism of the *Royal Deesis* iconography cannot be found in Byzantine art. Although Byzantine iconography of both Christ and the Theotokos was in many aspects influenced by the imperial images, there is no extant Byzantine image from the previous period which had depicted them with the full set of imperial insignia.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, whilst the representation of Christ as a Byzantine emperor is without precedent in Christian art, the image of the Virgin with imperial insignia was well known—although not in the East, but in the West. The possible link of the *Royal Deesis* with the Western *Maria Regina* images has already been suggested: there are numerous similarities between the *Royal Deesis* and the *Coronation of the Virgin*, the fundamental iconographical innovation of late-Romanesque, early-Gothic art which shows Mary either as a queen or as an empress.⁵⁹ This analysis, therefore, seeks to explore the relationship between the Eastern and Western iconographies and thus to unravel a more precise meaning of the *Royal Deesis* iconography.

⁵⁷ For the double meaning of omophorion as human nature and the lost sheep: Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 245–6. See also Chapters 2 and 6.

⁵⁸ J. Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 172–3; H. Maguire, 'The Heavenly Court', in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2004), 257–8.

⁵⁹ The link between the *Royal Deesis* and the *Coronation of the Virgin* iconographies was already pointed out: Ostashenko, 'Ob ikonograficheskom tipe ikony "Predsta Tsaritsa"', 179–81; P. Mijović, 'Carska Ikonografija u srpskoj srednjovekovnoj umetnosti', *Starinar* 18 (1968): 109–10.



Fig. 5.12. Apse mosaic, Santa Maria Trastevere, Rome, 1140–3.

Credit: The Warburg Institute, London.

The earliest large-scale example of the *Coronation of the Virgin* has been preserved in the apse mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere church in Rome (Fig. 5.12), commissioned by Pope Innocent II (1130–43). The mosaic represents the enthronement of the crowned, imperial Virgin on a shared throne with Christ, who embraces her, flanked by Roman saints.⁶⁰ In the first century of its history, the *Coronation* became widespread in Northern Europe, especially in France where it was common on the western portals of the new Gothic cathedrals.⁶¹ The south European proliferation of the iconography commenced in the last third of the thirteenth century, with, among others, the new *Coronation* apse mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (Fig. 5.13), executed by Jacopo Torriti in 1295, another papal commission, using the Santa Maria in Trastevere image as a prototype.⁶² Paolo Veneziano's

⁶⁰ For the *Coronation* mosaic at Santa Maria in Trastevere (with further bibliography): D. Kinney, 'The Image of a Building: Santa Maria in Trastevere', *California Italian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3fp5z3gz#author>; A. L. Perchuk, 'Schismatic (Re)Visions: S. Elia near Nepi and S. Maria in Trastevere in Rome, 1120–43', *Gesta* 55, no. 2 (2016): 179–212; Flor, *Glaube Und Macht*, 50–61; M. Stroll, *Symbols as Power: The Papacy Following the Investiture Contest* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1991), 162–79; Thérél, *Le triomphe de la Vierge-Église*, 194–202; Nilgen, 'Maria Regina—Ein Politischer Kultbildtypus?'; Ph. Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge: les origines et les premiers développements d'un thème iconographique* (Montréal, Paris: Institut d'études médiévales, 1980), 40–7.

⁶¹ Thérél, *Le triomphe de la Vierge-Église*, 299–337; Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge*, 113–26.

⁶² For the Italian proliferation of the *Coronation*: Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge*, 153–62. For the *Coronation* mosaic in Sta Maria Maggiore: G. Wolf, *Salus populi Romani: die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1990), 171–95.



Fig. 5.13. Apse mosaic, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, before 1296.

Credit: The Warburg Institute, London.

Coronation paintings in Venice (Fig. 5.14) inspired the first extant Balkan examples of the *Coronation* iconography in Dalmatia in the 1330s which subsequently became a central image of Catholic iconography everywhere in Western Europe, from the Middle Ages onwards.⁶³

The most singular features common to both Byzantine and Western images are the imperial or royal insignia and the golden vestments of the Virgin at the right hand of Christ, explained by inscriptions with a reference to Psalm 44:10, in both cases: ‘The queen stood at your right hand in apparel interwoven with gold.’⁶⁴ As we have seen, this psalm describes the King’s wedding with his betrothed in golden robes, identified with the Bride of the Song of Songs, who is simultaneously the symbol of the soul and the Church. Thus, Mary on Christ’s right is the royal Bride: she is an allegorical image of the human soul, cleansed from all sins, and she

⁶³ D. King, ‘A Venetian Embroidered Altar Frontal’, *Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (1965): 14–25. See also: S. Banić, ‘Zadarski gotički vezeni antependij u Budimpešti’, *Ars Adriatica* 4 (2014): 85, n. 36; H. Papastavrou, ‘À Propos d’un voile brodé vénitien du xive siècle à Zadar’, *Zograf* 32 (2008): 91–9.

⁶⁴ The inscription of the mosaic at Santa Maria in Trastevere reads: ‘In which [royal place], O Christ, your seat remains forever / Worthy of his right hand is she whom the golden robe envelopes’ (translation by M. Stroll: Stroll, *Symbols as Power: The Papacy Following the Investiture Contest*, 175.); whereas the *Royal Deesis* of the *Serbian Psalter* illustrates Ps 44/45 (Belting and Dufrenne, *Der Serbische Psalter*, 203–4.); as well as the inscription on the 1559 replica of the Novgorod *Royal Deesis* icon is also Ps 44:11 (Ostashenko, ‘Ob ikonograficheskom tipe ikony “Predsta Tsaritsa”’, 131.).



Fig. 5.14. Paolo Veneziano, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1324.

Credit: National Gallery of Art, Washington.

also personifies the Christian Church.⁶⁵ The Royal Couple of both the Roman *Coronation* mosaics and most of the early *Royal Deesis* images are flanked by the saints who figure as the guests ‘in wedding garment’ (Matt 22:11) at the royal wedding of the Church and Christ who is the ‘Lamb’ and also ‘the King of Kings’ (Rev 9:9, 16). The royal insignia and the golden garments, therefore, are indicators of the nuptial symbolism of both images, the *Coronation* and the *Royal Deesis*, adding, apart from the direct Christological-Marian message, Eucharistic-eschatological and ecclesiological interpretative layers to these iconographies.

A further, but less obvious element common to the two iconographies is the bird symbolism the ecclesiological meaning of which was discussed in Chapter 2. The Roman *Coronation* mosaics place the royal couple in a garden populated by birds. In the *Royal Deesis* of the Marko’s Monastery, on the other hand, John

⁶⁵ Flor, *Glaube Und Macht*, 5–13; Thérél, *Le triomphe de la Vierge-Église*, 134–45.

appears with wings. The winged Prodrome in this ecclesiological context clearly bears witness to the direct influence of the allegorical homily *On the Turtledove* which describes the Church as a bird, the faithful lover of her betrothed, who eagerly awaits the coming of her Bridegroom: John's bird voice announces the heavenly spring, Christ's coming for the turtledove-Church.⁶⁶ This Greek homily was popular not only in Rus but also its Latin translation was a common liturgical lection in the West. The dissemination of the text indicates that the bird symbolisms of both the Western and Eastern images might have had the same ecclesiological meaning and possibly were inspired by the same sermon.⁶⁷

The differences between the two images, however, are just as important as their similarities. The most significant innovation of the *Coronation* is that it separates the Virgin in royal insignia from the row of the saints, placing her in a shared throne with Christ. This novel element highlights the particularities of Western Mariology and through the figure of Mary, who is identified with the Church, also the particularities of Western ecclesiology. The crown and the shared throne are the signs of Mary's uniqueness: she was espoused by the King, Christ who made her 'not having spot or wrinkle' (Eph 5:27), the only human being on earth who was free from Original Sin and who became worthy to sit on a shared throne with her divine Bridegroom. Her co-enthronement, however, refers not only to the immaculacy of the Virgin but also to that of the only Church which has no spot, or any other defect or heresy, i.e. the Roman Church which is 'crowned and victoriously triumphs' in true faith and in right divine worship.⁶⁸

This idea reflects contemporary Roman ecclesiology, which promoted the doctrine of papal monarchy, an ecclesiological concept which had a determining role in the conflict between the Latin and Byzantine churches.⁶⁹ Elaborating this doctrine, Western theologians utilized the biblical imagery of the spiritual wedding to express their ideas about Ecclesia.⁷⁰ This brought a blossoming of allegorical interpretations of the Holy Scripture after the turn of the millennium, when a

⁶⁶ For the relationship between the *Turtledove* homily and the winged John the Baptist representations, see Chapter 2.

⁶⁷ Both the Latin and the Slavonic translations were transmitted under the name of John Chrysostom. The Latin translation was the lection for the second Sunday of Advent in the Western Church: F. Toker, *On Holy Ground: Liturgy, Architecture and Urbanism in the Cathedral and the Streets of Medieval Florence* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2009), 165; W. Wenk, *Zur Sammlung der 38 Homilien des Chrysostomus Latinus* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 15. The bird symbolism is a specific feature of other Roman apse mosaics, most importantly those in San Clemente, ca. 1118, for the interpretation of which the homily *On the Turtledove* may be of particular significance. For San Clemente: S. Riccioni, *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma: Exemplum della chiesa riformata* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2006). For the Slavonic version of the homily, see Chapter 2.

⁶⁸ Quotation from *Epistola prima ad Michaellem Constantinopolitanum* of Pope Leo IX (1049–54), C. Will, *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae Graecae et Latinae* (Leipzig, Marburg, 1861), 78.

⁶⁹ A. Papadakis and J. Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071–1453 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 46–58.

⁷⁰ W. Imkamp, *Das Kirchenbild Innocenz' III. (1198–1216)* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1983), 203–72.

series of new commentaries appeared on the Song of Songs and the Psalms, in order to give a full interpretation of the biblical imagery of the *nuptiae spirituales* in the light of innovative Roman ecclesiology. Distinguishing the earthly and pilgrimage Church (*ecclesia militans*) from the heavenly one (*ecclesia triumphans*), provided an opportunity for Honorius Augustodunensis (†1154) and subsequent Roman exegetes to identify the bride of the Song of Songs with the Roman Church and the bridegroom with the pope.⁷¹

The Virgin's royal insignia express the papal claim to *plenitudo potestatis*, the subordination of the temporal to the spiritual authority.⁷² The early formulation of this concept of supremacy of *sacerdotium* (spiritual power) over *imperium* or *regnum* (temporal power) can already be found in the letter of Pope Gelasius (492–6): 'There are two powers . . . , the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power. Of these that of the priests is the more weighty.'⁷³ This idea was the leitmotif of the *Donation of Constantine*, an eighth-century Latin forgery: 'the pontiffs . . . should obtain from us [Constantine] and our empire the power of a supremacy greater than the clemency of our earthly imperial serenity'.⁷⁴ According to this document, which was extensively utilized by the Latins in their polemics against the Greeks, Constantine the Great (307–36), the first Christian Roman emperor, gave imperial power and honour to the Roman popes.⁷⁵

A visual expression of this donation was the exclusive right of the popes, granted by the emperor, to use imperial insignia as hierarchs:

we [Constantine] by this present do give . . . the diadem, that is, the crown of our head, and at the same time the tiara and also the shoulder-band, that is, the strap that usually surrounds our imperial neck; and also the purple mantle and scarlet tunic, and all the imperial raiment . . . , and all the pomp of our imperial eminence, and the glory of our power [to the pontiffs of Rome].⁷⁶

⁷¹ Flor, *Glaube Und Macht*, 26–34, 67–8.

⁷² Thérel, *Le triomphe de la Vierge-Église*, 212–24; P. Skubiszewski, 'Ecclesia, christianitas, regnum et sacerdotium dans l'art des Xe–XIe siècle: idées et structures des images', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 28 (1985): 102–79, esp. 135–9. For the idea of *Plenitudo potestatis* from a Byzantine perspective: Papadakis and Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071–1453 A.D.*, 51–2; F. Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 59–62.

⁷³ Gelasius's letter to Anastasius (January 494), for an English translation: S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 8.

⁷⁴ English translation by J. Fried: J. Fried, 'Donation of Constantine' and 'Constitutum Constantini': *The Misinterpretation of a Fiction and Its Original Meaning* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 151. For the *Donation of Constantine* in Byzantium: D. G. Angelov, 'The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium', in *Church and Society in Late Byzantium*, ed. D. G. Angelov (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), 91–157.

⁷⁵ For the use of *Donation* in anti-Greek polemics: Angelov, 'The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium', 118–21; F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 252, 280, 288, 296; Will, *Acta et scripta*, 72.

⁷⁶ Fried, 'Donation of Constantine', 152.

This description unwittingly evokes the imperial insignia of the Virgin in the Coronation mosaic of the Santa Maria in Trastevere. The fact that only the Virgin has these insignia, while the divine Bridegroom is without crown and any explicit imperial regalia, can be easily interpreted as the visual expression of the concept of *plenitudo potestatis*.

The Bride of the *Coronation* is virgin and mother at the same time, just as Mary: she is virgin because she is without 'spot and wrinkle', i.e. e. heresy and error, and she is mother because she is the *mother of all Churches*, including even Jerusalem and all the other Patriarchates which do not have 'divine foundation'.⁷⁷ Roman theologians conceptualized Christ's promise to Apostle Peter, the believed to be first bishop of Rome, as the divine foundation of the Roman church: 'You are Peter, . . . and upon this rock I shall build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it . . .' (Matt 18:17–20).⁷⁸ 'Rome—mother of all Churches', the theory of Rome's supremacy over the four other Patriarchates (Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem), an improved version of the concept of *Rome's primacy*, emerged in the Carolingian period and was also supported by the *Donation of Constantine*: 'And we ordain and decree that he shall have the supremacy as well over the four chief seats Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem, as also over all the churches of God in the whole world.'⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, it was heavily attacked by Byzantine theologians throughout the Middle Ages who insisted that Jerusalem was the mother of all churches, the place of Christ's redemptive work and the starting point of apostolic preaching.⁸⁰

As a result of the separation of the Virgin from the other saints, the position of John the Baptist also differs in Byzantine and Western iconographies. The *Royal Deesis* retains the structure of the traditional *Deesis* where John balances the Theotokos. The Western *Coronation* iconography, however, has a different arrangement of saints. In the Santa Maria in Trastevere mosaic it is not John the Baptist who stands at the left of Christ, but Peter, which is a reference to Christ's promise, 'Tu es Petrus' (Matt 18:17–20) and to the *primacy of Rome*. One and a half centuries later, in the *Coronation* mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore, John the Baptist appears amongst the Latin saints who flank the divine throne. His presence clearly indicates that the *Coronation*, in fact, is a transformed *Deesis*, with the difference that here Peter is the pendant to John and not the Virgin. John and Peter stretch out their arms towards not only Christ but also Mary '*synthronos*', in a gesture of supplication.

⁷⁷ F. R. Gahbauer, *Gegen den Primat des Papstes: Studien zu Niketas Seides* (München: UNI-Druck, 1975), 151, 193–5.

⁷⁸ Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew*, 3–137.

⁷⁹ Fried, 'Donation of Constantine', 142. For its use in anti-Greek polemics: Will, *Acta et scripta*, 72. For the fifth-century roots of the concept of *Rome's primacy*: Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 285–321.

⁸⁰ Gahbauer, *Gegen den Primat des Papstes*, 195–8; A. Papadakis and A.-M. Talbot, 'John X Camaterus Confronts Innocent III: An Unpublished Correspondence', *Byzantinoslavica* 33 (1972): 31.

At Santa Maria in Trastevere, the heavenly couple are flanked by the Roman saints who represent all the ecclesiastical ranks, thus visualizing the body of the Roman Church.⁸¹ The frieze of twelve lambs, emerging from Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the symbol of the twelve apostles and *populus Dei*, is subordinate to this symbolic image of the *Ecclesia Romana*: the Apostles and their local churches (including Jerusalem) constitute the flock of the Church, the shepherd of which is the Vicar of Christ, the Pope.⁸² In the central axis of the apse mosaic, the enthroned Christ and below Him the Lamb of the Revelation appear—the images of the head of the heavenly Church; directly under these representations of Christ is the throne of the Pope, the head of the earthly Church.⁸³

The Virgin's Byzantine imperial insignia also refer to the Roman *Maria Regina* images, intimately connected with the popes. The iconography of the Royal Virgin in the mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere follows that of the local miraculous icon, the *Santa Maria della Clemenza* (Fig. 5.15).⁸⁴ This encaustic icon is the most prestigious Roman *Maria Regina* image, having an uncertain dating between the late sixth and early eighth centuries. There are two striking iconographic details in this icon which link the *Santa Maria della Clemenza* to papal Rome. The first is the figure of pope-donor in proskynesis. The second is the meticulous representation of the Byzantine imperial insignia (the Byzantine crown with *pendilia* and the purple *dalmatica*) with some modifications (for example, the *loros*—a jewelled sash—is missing).⁸⁵ Since the Virgin is a personification of the Church, her imperial vestments may express the idea of the sovereignty of the Church. Her imperial symbols can readily be interpreted in the light of the ecclesiology of the *Donation of Constantine* which attribute imperial insignia exclusively to the popes as hierarchs. Unsurprisingly, images of *Maria Regina* were frequently commissioned by the Roman popes from the eighth century onwards. As a result, the *Maria Regina* was perceived as a specifically Roman icon. Ursula Nilgen claims that the *Maria Regina* served as 'Madonna of the Popes' from the early eighth century onwards at the latest.⁸⁶ The royal Virgins of the Roman *Coronation* mosaics, therefore, identified the Bride with the Roman church, revealing the anti-Byzantine undertone of the *Coronation* iconography.

⁸¹ Kinney, 'The Image of a Building', 21. Cf. Nilgen, 'Maria Regina—Ein Politischer Kultbildtypus?', 29; Stroll, *Symbols as Power*, 174.

⁸² For the Roman context of this detail: E. Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13–38.

⁸³ Kinney, 'The Image of a Building', 22–3. Cf. Nilgen, 'Maria Regina—Ein Politischer Kultbildtypus?', 27–8; Stroll, *Symbols as Power*, 174.

⁸⁴ For a bibliography of *Santa Maria della Clemenza*: Lidova, 'Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia', 109–12; M. Lidova, 'The Earliest Images of Maria Regina in Rome and Byzantine Imperial Iconography', *Nis̄ and Byzantium* 8 (2010): 231–2; G. Steigerwald, *Purpurgewänder biblischer und kirchlicher Personen als Bedeutungsträger in der frühchristlichen Kunst* (Bonn: Borengässer, 1999), 115–22.

⁸⁵ For the anti-Byzantine visual polemic of the 'lorosless *Maria Regina*': B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 22–6.

⁸⁶ Nilgen, 'Maria Regina—Ein Politischer Kultbildtypus?', 30.



Fig. 5.15. *Santa Maria della Clemenza*, encaustic icon, between the sixth and eighth centuries. Santa Maria Trastevere, Rome.

The Royal Deesis and Anti-Latin Visual Polemics in the East

In the *Royal Deesis*, the novel, late Byzantine visualization of the *nuptiae spirituales*, the Theotokos is similarly vested as in the Roman *Coronations*, in Byzantine imperial insignia, but now with *loros*. These insignia, however, are not a reference to an older Byzantine local icon, as the Treskavec dome fresco (Fig. 5.4) is the first extant Byzantine example of the representation of the Royal Theotokos. In spite of this lacuna, some art historians, referring to the emphasized Byzantine insignia of the early Roman *Maria Regina* images, for example those of the *Santa Maria della Clemenza*, hypothesize the existence of *Maria Regina* representations in Byzantium.⁸⁷ The lack of archaeological evidence from the

⁸⁷ Most recently Lidova has argued in favour of the Byzantine origin of the *Maria Regina*, in common with John Osborne: Lidova, 'Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia'; Lidova, 'The Earliest Images of Maria Regina'; J. Osborne, 'Images of the Mother of God in Early Medieval Rome', in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. A. Eastmond and L. James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 138–9. An opposite, for me more convincing, position is held by P. J. Nordhagen, 'Constantinople on the Tiber: The Byzantines in Rome and the Iconography of

early period does not make it possible to give a definitive answer to this question, but it is also evident that already the earliest *Maria Regina* images reflect Roman peculiarities. As Gerhard Wolf observes:

In the present context, whether that particular iconography was a Greek or a Latin invention is less important than the fact that it was appropriated in Papal Rome over the centuries with specific connotations, and that already by the Carolingian period the Madonna dell Clemenza had become an authoritative prototype, used in papal propaganda in the investiture controversy and during the Counter-Reformation.⁸⁸

Likewise, the observations outlined above about the anti-Greek agenda of the Roman *Maria Regina* iconography, undermine the hypotheses about the proliferation and popularity of *Maria Regina* images in Byzantium: the *Maria Regina* image might have had a progressively explicit anti-Byzantine polemical message in accordance with the increasing ecclesiastical conflict between Rome and Constantinople in the second half of the first millennium. It is necessary to emphasize that this ecclesiastical conflict was not merely political rivalry; accordingly, the *Maria Regina* was not a simple ‘political cult image’⁸⁹, or ‘the result of papal political propaganda’.⁹⁰ It was primarily a theological disagreement about the Church as Christ’s body and, as discussed earlier, the iconography of *Maria Regina* undoubtedly reflects a Roman concept of *Ecclesia*. This Roman ecclesiology gradually took shape from the end of the fifth century onwards and led to irreconcilable differences between the Latins and the Byzantines.⁹¹

Furthermore, there is a striking coincidence in time between the Venetian and Dalmatian proliferation of the Western *Coronation* iconography at the beginning of the fourteenth century and the subsequent appearance of the Orthodox *Royal Deesis* around the 1340s. Consequently, the lack of *Maria Regina* images in Byzantine art, on the one hand, and this coincidence in time between the first Balkan examples of the *Coronation* and the *Royal Deesis*, on the other, leaves little

Their Images’, in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. J. M. H. Smith (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), 113–34. For further bibliography: Lidova, ‘The Earliest Images of Maria Regina’, 232, n. 5.

⁸⁸ G. Wolf, ‘Icons and Sites: Cult Images of the Virgin in Medieval Rome’, in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 38.

⁸⁹ Nilgen, ‘Maria Regina—Ein politischer Kultbildtypus?’, 30–3; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 21–6.

⁹⁰ Lidova, ‘Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia’, 122.

⁹¹ A. E. Sicienski, ‘Byzantium and the Papacy from the Fifth to Fifteenth Centuries: The Three-Stage Response’, in *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Bucossi and A. Calia (Leuven, Paris, Bristol CT: Peeters, 2020), 1–30; A. E. Sicienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 140–239; Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*; Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium*.

doubt that the Royal Theotokos in the *Royal Deesis* was an Orthodox appropriation from the Western *Coronation of the Virgin*.

If this is the case, one might argue that Orthodox painters adopted the royal symbolism of the Western nuptial imagery; but in doing so, they placed it into the new transformative context of the Byzantine *Deesis*, by abolishing the unique synthonos status of the Theotokos, the main indicator of Western ecclesiology. They kept the traditional *Deesis* structure which reflects Christ's words on the spiritual wedding of the Church (John 3:29): the central figure of Christ is the Divine Bridegroom—the Lamb and the Shepherd—the Theotokos-Church is the Bride and John the Baptist is the friend of the Bridegroom.

A further significant modification and innovation is the detail that not only the Virgin but also Christ wears the Byzantine imperial insignia in *Royal Deesis*. Although Byzantine iconography of Christ was in many aspects influenced by imperial images, as earlier noted, Byzantine art had earlier avoided explicitly identifying Christ with earthly emperors.⁹² Accordingly, there is an apparent correlation between the appearance of imperial Marian and Christological images. The fact that Byzantine visualizations of spiritual wedding paired the imperial Bride with Christ as Byzantine Emperor changed the message of these images radically compared to the Latin ones. The imperial insignia denote both Christ's royal ancestry and heavenly kingship, which is the source of earthly royal power. The identification of these insignia with those of the Byzantine emperor is an acknowledgement of the Byzantine concept of *imperium*, on the one hand, and a challenge of the papal *plenitudo potestatis*, on the other.⁹³ According to Byzantine perception, there is only one Christian empire on earth, the Roman one, the centre of which is now in Constantinople, the New Rome.⁹⁴

Thus, although the similarities between the *Coronation* and *Royal Deesis* may suggest artistic collaboration or religious rapprochement, they are, in fact, indicators of polemics between the Orthodox and the Latins. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the fourteenth century witnessed to the intensification of the debates over a possible union between the two Churches, both in the

⁹² Cf. Maguire, 'The Heavenly Court', 257–8; Steigerwald, *Purpurgewänder*, 66; K. Wessel, 'Christusbild', in *RBK*, vol. I, 1966, 1003–4, 1024–7. See also: T. F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 177–90.

⁹³ Undoubtedly, both the lack of Christ's imperial insignia in the Roman *Coronation* and their presence in the Byzantine *Royal Deesis* can be also interpreted as different perceptions of the relationship between *sacerdotium* and *imperium* in the Christian West and the Byzantine East. In the light of this comparison, the presence of Christ's imperial insignia in Byzantine images seems to me rather an acknowledgement of the power of secular rulers than its challenge. For this reason, the attempts to link the creation of the *Royal Deesis* iconography to the pretensions of the Patriarch of Constantinople for temporal power leave considerable doubt: Vapheiadis, 'Sacerdotium and Imperium in Late Byzantine Art'; T. Papamastorakis, 'Η μορφή του Χριστού-Μεγάλου Αρχιερέα', *DChAE* 17 (1994 1993): 67–78. For this question see also: Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 133–207.

⁹⁴ Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium*, 39–105. Cf. Sicienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 268; Angelov, 'The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium', 117–18.

Balkans and in the territory of Lithuania which was under the jurisdiction of the Rus metropolitanate.⁹⁵ These controversies led to the flourishing of Orthodox anti-Latin literature.⁹⁶

The full polemical agenda of the *Royal Deesis*, therefore, is revealed by those anti-Latin texts that challenge the supremacy of Rome.⁹⁷ Greek authors claimed that the primacy of the Roman See followed not from Peter's status amongst the apostles (the so-called 'principle of apostolicity'), but it was a consequence of the fact that Rome had been the capital of the Roman Empire. This idea of 'secular primacy' or 'concept of accommodation', was the basis of the Byzantine demand for the same ecclesiastical status for Constantinople, the New Rome as the Old Rome earlier had.⁹⁸ As we shall see, this concept of 'secular primacy' exercised a profound influence on Russian ecclesiological and political ideas after the Union of Florence (1439) and the Fall of Constantinople (1453).⁹⁹

In conceptualizing the Church, Greek theologians frequently used the image of body. They argued that there are five patriarchates in the Church, which are all equal: like the five senses of the body, each makes its own contribution to the organism.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, they denied that the Pope could be the chief Shepherd of Christ's flock, as the Church has only one common Shepherd, the Great High Priest of the New Covenant, Christ who is the only head of the Church. In the early versions of the *Royal Deesis*, as mentioned, Christ's archpriesthood was only alluded to. In the Novgorod images, however, Christ has both imperial and high priestly insignia: he appears as an Orthodox Patriarch thus promoting the idea of five equal patriarchates, the *pentarchy*.¹⁰¹

In this new type of *Royal Deesis*, Christ-Emperor wears the Byzantine episcopal stole, the omophorion.¹⁰² The omophorion as the symbol of the fallen humanity and lost sheep, refers to the redemptory priesthood of Christ 'according to the

⁹⁵ Sicienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 309–21. For the ecclesiastical situation in the fourteenth-century 'Byzantine Commonwealth': F. Dvornik, *The Slavs in European History and Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1962), 89–119; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 48–72, 226–60.

⁹⁶ For the thirteenth–fourteenth-century anti-Catholic literature in Bulgaria: A. N. Nikolov, *Mezhdurim i Konstantinopol: iz antikatolicheskata literatura v Bŭlgariia i slavianskiia pravoslaven sviat (XI–XVII v.)* (Sofia: Fondatsiia Bŭlgarsko istoricheskoto nasledstvo, 2016), 121–71. For further bibliography on anti-Latin polemical literature, see Chapter 10.

⁹⁷ Sicienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 240–326; A. V. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma: Istoriia greko-latinskikh sporov IX–XII vekov* (Moscow: Bibliotheca Ignatiana, 2006); F. R. Gahbauer, *Die Pentarchietheorie: Ein Modell der Kirchenleitung von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1993), 177–272; Gahbauer, *Gegen den Primat des Papstes*; Papadakis and Talbot, 'John X Camaterus Confronts Innocent III', 30–3; J. Darrouzès, 'Les documents byzantins du XIIe siècle sur la primauté romaine', *Revue des études byzantines* 23 (1965): 42–88; Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium*, 265–99.

⁹⁸ Papadakis and Talbot, 'John X Camaterus Confronts Innocent III', 33.

⁹⁹ See Chapters 10 and 12.

¹⁰⁰ Papadakis and Talbot, 'John X Camaterus Confronts Innocent III', 31.

¹⁰¹ For the iconography of Christ-High Priest with bibliography: Tomić-Durić, 'To Picture and to Perform, II', 2015, 129–31.

¹⁰² Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 13–16.

order of Melchizedek' (Ps 109:4).¹⁰³ Christ's priesthood is discussed in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* which juxtaposes it with the sacrifice of the Old Law, the priesthood of Aaron: "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:11–12; cf. 5:10; 7:11). Thus, by referring to both Christ's sacrifice on the cross and its re-enactment in the liturgy, Christ's omophorion makes the hidden Eucharistic message of the *Deesis* explicit.

As an image of the spiritual wedding, the *Royal Deesis* is the image of the liturgy in which Christ is simultaneously the sacrifice and the one who offers the sacrifice: his Divine throne is the image of the altar on which the Lamb is sacrificed, and his episcopal attributes signify his priesthood. In the context of anti-Latin polemics, however, the *Royal Deesis* concurrently promotes the Byzantine liturgical practice with Christ in Byzantine hierarchal vestments against the Latin rite. As we shall see in Chapter 7, this liturgical-polemical agenda is of profound importance, therefore, it is not coincidental that the development of *Royal Deesis* iconography is inseparably intertwined with that of the liturgical scenes in Byzantine sanctuary.

The combined sacerdotal and royal attributes on the *Royal Deesis* present Christ as a Patriarch: they simultaneously refer to the Byzantine imperial idea, the Orthodox liturgy, and the *pentarchy*. Although the image amalgamates various layers of Byzantine anti-Latin polemics, challenging both Roman papal doctrine and Latin liturgical practice, it remained a powerful and accessible visualization of an Orthodox identity which defined itself against the Western Christianity. In the *Royal Deesis*, Christ appears as a Byzantine emperor and a Patriarch and not as a Roman Pope, which had a very clear message in the centuries when the question of the union between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches under the supremacy of the Pope was a central ecclesiastical issue. It was this striking anti-unionist agenda of the *Royal Deesis* which made it a highly popular image in Post-Byzantine art.

To conclude, the comparison of the *Coronation* and the *Royal Deesis* has revealed that although they seem to represent similar subject-matter, their messages are directly opposed. The similarities between the two are not only a consequence of the common biblical and exegetical material which they elaborate on but also the result of their mutual references to each other: the Byzantine imperial insignia in the Western images or the Roman *Maria Regina* in the Eastern ones appear as *polemical quotations*, the function of which is to make

¹⁰³ See Chapters 2 and 6.

the target of the polemics recognizable.¹⁰⁴ It was this anti-Latin and pro-Constantinople agenda of the *Royal Deesis* which contributed to the appearance of this iconography in Novgorod at the end of the fourteenth century. The *Novgorod Sophia* icon, in its turn, adopting the basic arrangement of the *Royal Deesis*, also borrowed its multi-layered symbolism and polemical undertones, but, at the same time, profoundly transforming it, filled it with new meaning.

The Sophiological Synthesis

The analysis of the *Deesis* and *Royal Deesis* iconographies has revealed that they convey the same nuptial-ecclesiological symbolism which is the leitmotif of the Sophia commentary. This observation suggests a conceptual link between the *Deesis/Royal Deesis* and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. The differences between them, however, are striking, especially in the case of the central figure, who is not Christ in the *Sophia* icon, but the winged Wisdom with Christ above her.

There is a detail, however, which is common to both the Russian *Royal Deesis* and the *Novgorod Sophia* images. This is the royal insignia of the Bride of the *Royal Deesis* and those of *Sophia* which shed light on the actual relationship between these two iconographies. The two royal figures have similar royal vestments: purple dalmatica with golden *loros* and *superhumeral*, the imperial decorative collar; but most importantly, both the royal Theotokos and Sophia wear an open crown. The only significant difference is that the sleeves of Sophia's royal garments are not wide which would clearly indicate her female gender, but are finished by cuffs, *epimaniki*.¹⁰⁵ As a result, Sophia's gender remains ambiguous, in common with the royal Sophia figure of the *Kyiv Psalter*, supporting the ceiling of a domed church (Fig. 4.1). This shared royal symbolism of the *Royal Deesis* and *Novgorod Sophia* iconographies is the clue to the chief innovation of the *Sophia* icon: the creators of this image removed Mary's identification with the Bride-Church. Instead of the Theotokos, they identified the Church with the Bird Sophia, who is depicted in the royal attributes of the *Royal Deesis*'s Virgin. Now she, the winged and crowned Wisdom, symbolizes the body of Christ, the Church. Further parallels to Sophia's vestments and insignia can be found in the images of *Descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)*: below the twelve Apostles there is a bearded Cosmos figure in a semicircle grotto, a personification of the universe enlightened by the Holy Spirit: his imperial insignia likewise convey an ecclesiological meaning.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ For the phenomenon of *polemical quotation*: Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl'.

¹⁰⁵ For a description of Byzantine imperial vestments: Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*, 136–48.

¹⁰⁶ See for example the *Pentecost* icon of the Novgorod Dukhov Monastery (late fourteenth–early fifteenth century), from NGM, no. KP 2183 DRZh-131: 'Ikona. Soshestvie sv. Dukha', accessed 25 June 2020, <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/101269>; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko,

Above Sophia the blessing Christ—the head of the Church—is depicted. His bust recalls the *Pantokrator* representations in the domes of the Orthodox churches, as ‘the dome of church is the Lord’s head’.¹⁰⁷ This double formula with Sophia and Christ, therefore, is the representation of the ecclesiological relationship between the two Sophias, the body (the Church) and the head (Christ).

Thus, the key to the riddle of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is that it integrated the sophiological iconography into the ecclesiological structure of the *Deesis*. The central figure of Christ, who is Wisdom, is replaced by two Wisdoms. The figure of the winged Sophia, therefore, preserved the double meaning of Sophia which is a peculiarity of the sophiological iconography of Novgorod: Sophia refers to both the created Wisdom which is Christ’s humanity and to Christ himself who took on this humanity in his incarnation and deified it: ‘Wisdom has Christ above the head as the head is Wisdom.’ This is the sophiological antinomy of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

As a result, the iconographical analysis supports the results of the philological research: the *Novgorod Sophia* combined the ecclesiological message of the *Royal Deesis* with a sophiological content. The investigations of both the commentary on the Sophia icon and the *Deesis* iconography have shown the multi-layer symbolism of Christian ecclesiological exegesis and iconography. The study of the satellite texts of the commentary in Chapter 3 has revealed that medieval sophiology likewise had many different interpretative layers. The combination of the ecclesiological and sophiological iconographies on the *Novgorod Sophia* icon meant the fusion of these two complex themes. This combination is the essence of this iconography which can be termed as the ‘sophiological synthesis’ of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. This ‘sophiological synthesis’ resulted in an extremely compound symbolism as shown in Table 2 (Appendix).

The inclusion of the figure of Sophia in the *Royal Deesis* composition had implications: Christ and the Theotokos have been deprived from their imperial and priestly insignia. Christ is no longer a patriarch. Whilst the *Royal Deesis* placed the idea of *pentarchy* in the centre of its ecclesiological message, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon identified the Church with Wisdom: the Orthodox Church is the Hagia Sophia and Orthodoxy is wisdom. The new message is reinforced by the separation of the body from the head: Sophia has bird wings, so that she ‘can fly higher as soon as she sees the hunter’, that is heresy.

The *Novgorod Sophia* retained the anti-Latin visual polemics of the *Royal Deesis*: the imperial footstool is replaced by the circular rock, as, the *Commentary* explains,

Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek, 32–40. See also Cat. 10. For the Cosmos figure in Byzantine *Pentecost* images: Ch. Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1970), 212–14.

¹⁰⁷ Quotation from the Rus liturgical commentary, the so-called *Tolkovaia Sluzhba*. Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 358–9. See also Chapter 4.

‘upon this rock I will build my church’ (Matt 16:19). The citation derives from Christ’s promise to Peter, ‘Tu es Petrus’, the basis of Roman ecclesiology. In the Sophia icon, however, instead of Petrine references, the seven pillars of Wisdom’s house are depicted flanking the rock which bears Sophia’s throne (clearly visible on Figs 0.4, 1.2, 11.8, 12.3). According to the common Orthodox interpretation of the Proverbs, which was even depicted in the late fifteenth-century ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ icon from the Malo-Kirillov Monastery (Fig. 4.3), the seven pillars denote the Seven Ecumenical Councils (see Chapters 1, 6, and 10).¹⁰⁸ Importantly, Sophia’s throne in this image of ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ with the representation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils also held by seven pillars, in common with the *Novgorod Sophia* icons. This iconographic detail reflects the arguments of Byzantine polemicists insisting that the rock upon which Christ builds his Church is not Peter himself, but his solid confession of the true faith.¹⁰⁹ The source of Orthodoxy is not Rome which, according to the Latins, ‘is unshaken by heresies’, but the Ecumenical Councils where all the Churches were represented and thus comprise the universal Church. Similarly, the Virgin is not a royal bride. She neither intercedes, nor supplicates, as she does in the *Deesis*: here she elevates an aureole, a circular mandorla with the blessing Emmanuel. Her figure is another key element of the ‘sophiological synthesis’ of the *Novgorod Sophia* image.

¹⁰⁸ For the Orthodox iconography of the Seven Ecumenical Councils: Walter, *L’iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine*. For a bibliography of the ‘*Wisdom has built her house*’ icon of Malo-Kirillov Monastery (GTG, no. 28830), see Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁹ Archimandrite Arsenii (Ivashchenko), *Tri stat’i neizvestnogo grecheskogo pisatel’ia nachala XIII v. v zashchitu pravoslaviia i oblicheniia novostei latinskikh v vere i blagochestii* (Moscow: Tip. A. I. Snegirevoi, 1892), 99.

6

Sophia in the Womb of the Virgin

Sophia Has Built Her Temple

A particular feature of the exegesis of the ninth chapter of Proverbs is that it addresses the main questions of Christology, Mariology, ecclesiology, and Eucharistic teaching in a combined and very concise way. As mentioned above in connection with Slavic questions-and-answers, Hippolytus of Rome's third-century commentary on Proverbs already contains all the interpretative layers of this passage: 'Christ, he means, the wisdom and power of God the Father, has built his house, i.e., his nature in the flesh derived from the Virgin . . . "Wisdom of God, has built her house" by a mother who knew no man . . . , as he assumed the temple of the body.'¹ Thereafter, Hippolytus identifies the beasts who Sophia has slaughtered (Prov 9:2) with 'the prophets and martyrs who in every city and country are slain like sheep every day by the unbelieving, in behalf of the truth' and Wisdom's servants who she sent out (Prov 9:3) with the apostles 'who traversed the whole world, and called the nations to the knowledge of him [Christ]'. Finally, he emphasizes the Eucharistic significance of Prov 9:5 ('Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I mixed for you'): 'He gave His divine flesh and honoured blood to us, to eat and to drink it for the remission of sins.'²

Due to the Christological interpretation of Prov 9:1, this passage played, as discussed earlier, an important role in the great Christological debates of Christianity: as a result, its exegesis frequently appears in patristic literature.³ The significance of this exegesis is indicated by its constant presence not only in erotapokritic miscellanies but also in liturgical texts. Proverbs 9:1–11 is a lesson in the Marian feasts (the Birth, the Annunciation, and the Dormition of the Mother of God), it is an Old Testament reading in some ecclesiological feasts (Renewal of the Temple of the Resurrection of Christ at Jerusalem—13 Sept, as well as, according to the Constantinople Hagia Sophia's tenth-century typikon, the feast of the Consecration of this church) and finally in Jerusalem around the seventh

¹ Hippolytus, *In Proverbs 9:1*, ANF, V, 175, translated by Rev. S. D. F. Salmond.

² *Ibid.* 175–6.

³ For Athanasius of Alexandria, see Chapter 3. For a short outline of the patristic exegesis of Prov 9:1–11: Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 303–4, 309; Zolotarev, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhiaa', 232–41. For Dionysius the Areopagite: Prokhorov, 'Poslanie Titu—Ierarkhu'.

century, it was a lesson on the Great Thursday, the feast of the Last Supper.⁴ Accordingly, the exegesis of Proverbs 9 can be found, among others, in the hymnography of Christmas and Marian feasts, that of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils and, as demonstrated earlier, in the canon for Holy Thursday.⁵

The seven columns of Sophia's temple, which in Hippolytus's explanation denote the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, were also frequently identified with the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church in later texts. Thus, the exegesis of Proverbs 9 links Christ's incarnation through the Virgin Mary to the concept of the Church as Christ's body which is the source of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This temple has been built upon the apostolic preaching and the martyrdom of the saints who were killed for the true faith codified by the holy fathers in the Seven Ecumenical Councils, as 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding' (Prov 9:10). Sophia's bread and wine are the Eucharist making the members of the Church partakers of Christ's living flesh. The centre of this combined ecclesiological-sophiological image is the Theotokos, 'the Temple that is to hold God', 'the heavenly Tabernacle', 'the sacred treasure of the glory of God', and the 'divine sanctuary of the eternal essence'.⁶ This is the reason why she plays a key role in the 'sophiological synthesis' of the Novgorod Wisdom icon (see Table 2 in the Appendix).

A peculiarity of the Russian iconography '*Wisdom has built her house*', where the female Wisdom figure symbolizes Christ who has built his Church, is that here the enthroned Virgin with Christ appears in the right field of the composition as a visual exegesis of the allegorical image of Proverbs 9 (Figs 4.2–4.4). In the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, the Theotokos who holds in her hands the enthroned, golden-robed, blessing Emmanuel in the aureole, has a similar function: she provides a clue to the sophiological meaning of the icon. Consequently, in order to comprehend the synthesis of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, it is essential to explore the historical roots and meaning of this type of Marian iconography.

⁴ For the Hagia Sophia typikon: A. A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei, khianiashchikhsia v bibliotekakh pravoslavnogo vostoka*, vol. I: *Typika* (Kyiv, 1895), 34; K. K. Akent'ev, 'Mozaiki Kievskoi Sv. Sofii i "Slovo" Mitropolita Ilariona v vizantiiskom liturgicheskom kontekste', in *Liturgiia, arkhitektura i iskusstvo vizantiiskogo mira*, ed. K. K. Akent'ev (St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 1995), 82. Gospel lesson for the feasts of Consecration of the Churches in Jerusalem and Constantinople: Matt 16:13–18, a verse—Matt 13:18—which is quoted in the Sophia commentary. For the Canon of the Holy Thursday, see Chapter 4 and Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia', 393.

⁵ See Chapters 1, 3 and 4.

⁶ Quotations from the following liturgical hymns: Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (21 November), Vespers, sticheron; Mattins, Canon, Sixth Ode and Kontakion; Nativity of the Theotokos (8 September), Vespers, sticheron. Mother Mary and Archimandrite K. Ware, trans., *The Festal Menaion* (London: Faber, 1969), 172, 184, 185 and 105.

The Theotokos *Nikopoios* at the Ohrid Saint Sophia Church

The figure of the Theotokos holding the mandorla of Emmanuel is a very rare and ancient iconographic type.⁷ It is called *Nikopoios* in art-historical, sigillographic, and numismatic studies based on some eleventh-century seals where the inscription *Nikopoios* ('victory bringer') accompanies the image of Mary holding the aureole of Christ (Figs 6.1–6.2), although there are other icons (e.g. the *Hodegetria*) which were also labelled as *Nikopoios* by the Byzantines and this name does not necessarily reflect the main message of the image.⁸



Fig. 6.1. Theotokos *Nikopoios*, Seal of Justinian I (527–65). BZS.1955.1.4249.

Credit: Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

⁷ For the *Nikopoios* iconography: V. Cantone, 'Iconografia mariana e culto popolare nel codice Siriaco 341 di Parigi', *Rivista di storia della miniatura* 5 (2011): 17–25; M. Tatić-Đurić, 'Bogorodica Nikopeja', in *Studije o Bogorodici* (Belgrade: Jasen, 2007), 159–74; Ch. Baltoyanni, 'The Mother of God in Portable Icons', in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 139–41; Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού Βήματος*, 82–3; Werner Seibt, 'Der Bildtypus der Theotokos *Nikopoios*. Zur Ikonographie der Gottesmutter-Ikone, die in 1030/31 in der Blachernenkirche Wiedergefunden wurde', *Byzantina* 13 (1985): 20–37; A. Weis, *Die Madonna Platytera: Entwurf für ein Christentum als Bildoffenbarung Anhand der Geschichte eines Madonnenthemas* (Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche, 1985), 20–37; G. A. Wellen, *Theotokos: eine ikonographische Abhandlung über das Gottesmutterbild in frühchristlicher Zeit* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1961), 178–83; A. Grabar, 'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine et de la Vierge', *Cahiers archéologiques* 8 (1956): 259–61; N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografija Bogomateri*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1914), 304–19; N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografija Bogomateri*, vol. II (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1915), 124–36.

⁸ Seibt, 'Der Bildtypus der Theotokos *Nikopoios*', 555–6; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 79.



Fig. 6.2. Theotokos *Nikopoios*, Nomisma tetarteron of Romanos III Argyros (1028–34). BZC.1948.17.2844.

Credit: Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

The closest known parallels with the Novgorod *Nikopoios* are two frescoes at Ohrid: in the main apse of the Sophia Church (1053–6, Figs 6.3–6.4) and in the conch of the prothesis at the Theotokos Peribleptos Church (1294/95, Fig. 6.5). Surprisingly, except for these two Ohrid images and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, no large-scale Byzantine Theotokos *Nikopoios* images have survived from the period after the eleventh century.⁹ Apparently, the two murals at Ohrid are not independent from each other which is indicated by the similar Eucharistic symbolism of both images. In the Peribleptos church, the mandorla in the hands of the Mother of God is not flat but has a depth which recalls a Eucharistic bowl: the Theotokos elevates Emmanuel as the Lamb of Sacrifice.¹⁰ This gesture of elevation, a reference to the Anaphora, links the two Ohrid *Nikopoios* images.

The *Nikopoios* of the Sophia Church is the central image of a highly complex and innovative Eucharistic iconographic programme (Figs 6.3, 6.4, 7.2).¹¹ The Theotokos

⁹ Except for the eleventh- and early twelfth-century coins, there are surviving wall-paintings with *Nikopoios* in Egypt from the thirteenth century, in the Monastery of Saint Anthony (Deir Mar Antonios) and in the White Monastery, Sohag, in the Church of Saint Shenouda. Cantone, 'Iconografia Mariana e culto popolare nel codice Siriaco 341 di Parigi', 21–2.

¹⁰ For the *Nikopoios* of the Theotokos Peribleptos Church at Ohrid (with further bibliography): M. Marković, 'Ikonografski program najstarijeg živopisa crkve Bogorodice Perivlepte u Ohridu: Popis fresaka i beleške o pojedinim programskim osobenostima', *Zograf* 35 (2011): 123–24, n. 101.

¹¹ For the sanctuary decoration program of the Ohrid Saint Sophia Church see also Chapter 7 and M. Evangelatou, 'Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life: The Theotokos as Provider of the Eucharist in Byzantine Culture', in *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, ed. Th. Arentzen and M. Cunningham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 100–6; O. S. Popova, 'Freski sobora Sv. Sofii Okhridskoi i iskusstvo 40-kh–50-kh gg. XI v.',



Fig. 6.3. Theotokos *Nikopoios*, fresco in the conch, Ohrid, St Sophia, between 1052 and 1056.
Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

Vizantiiskii vremennik 74 (2015): 212–24; A. M. Lidov, *Ikona: Mir sviatykh obrazov v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Feoriia, 2014), 237–74; B. Todić, 'Arhiepisop Lav—Tvorac ikonografskog programa fresaka u Svetoj Sofiji Ohridskoj', in *Vizantijski svet na Balkanu*, ed. B. Kršmanović, Lj. Maksimović, and R. Radić, vol. I (Beograd: Vizantološki institut SANU, 2012), 119–36; B. Todić, 'Représentations de Papes Romains dans l'église Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid: Contribution à l'Idéologie de l'archevêché d'Ohrid', *DChAE* 39 (2008): 105–18; B. Schellewald, 'Ohrid, Malerei', in *RBK*, vol. VII, 2009, 252–319; B. Schellewald, 'Johannes Chrysostomos und die Rhetorik der Bilder im Bema der Sophienkirche in Ohrid', in *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters*, ed. R. Brändle and M. Wallraff (Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), 169–92; B. Schellewald, 'Vom Unsichtbaren zum Sichtbaren: Liturgisches Zeremoniell und Bild in Byzanz im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert', in *Riten, Gesten, Zeremonien. Gesellschaftliche Symbolik in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. E. Bierende, S. Bretfeld, and K. Oschema (Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), 142–66; A. M. Lidov, 'Obrazy Khrista v khramovoi dekoratsii i vizantiiskaia khristologia posle skhizmy 1054 goda', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Vizantiia i Drevniaia Rus'*, ed. E. S. Smirnova and A. L. Batalov (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1999), 155–77; A. Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration and the Great Schism of 1054', *Byzantion* 68, no. 2 (1998): 381–405; A. M. Lidov, 'Obraz "Khrista-arkhiereia" v ikonograficheskoi programme Sofii Okhridskoj', in *Vizantiia i Rus': pamiati Very Dmitrievny Likhachevoi, 1937–1981*, ed. G. K. Vagner (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 65–90; Sh. E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle; London: College Art Association; University of Washington Press, 1999), 59, 63, 83–4; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 175–6, 194, 198; R. Hamann-MacLean and H. Hallensleben, *Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien* (Giessen: W. Schmitz, 1976), 215–42; A. Wharton Epstein, 'The Political Content of the Painting of Saint Sophia at Ohrid', *Jahrbuch Der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 29 (1980): 315–25; A. Grabar, 'Les peintures murales dans le chœur de Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid', *Cahiers*



Fig. 6.4. Theotokos *Nikopoios* and *Ascension*, fresco decoration in the apse and bema vault, Ohrid, St Sophia, between 1053 and 1056.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

does not stand but sits on a monumental throne holding the iridescent mandorla of Emmanuel in front of her upper body. Emmanuel wears a golden tunic, whilst a white thin band, decorated with stripes and crosses, similar to a stole, is draped over his shoulder, the two sides of which are wound around his waist. He is seated on a hardly visible rainbow, indicating his heavenly dwelling place. He blesses with his right hand, whilst he holds a book with his left. In the apse, below the Theotokos holding the aureole of Christ, there is another image of Christ who in his usual tunic stands behind an altar ciborium, flanked by the apostles approaching to communion. Christ blesses with his right hand and holds in his left the prominent circular Eucharistic bread (prospora), on which the central stamp, the Lamb (Amnos) is clearly differentiated. This is one of the earliest examples of the iconography of the *Communion of the Apostles* in central apse decoration, another being in the nearly coeval apse mosaics of the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral.¹² The gesture of Christ with raised right arm at Ohrid is a motif which connects the two aforementioned Christ images with a third depicted on the barrel vault above the apse: this is the glorified

archéologiques 15 (1965): 257–65; S. Radojčić, 'Prilozi za istoriju najstarijeg ohridskog slikarstva', *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 8, no. 2 (1964): 355–81; R. Ljubinković, 'Les influences de la vie politique contemporaine sur la décoration des églises d'Ohrid', in *Actes du XIIIe congrès international des études byzantines*, vol. III (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1964), 222–4; P. Miljković-Peppek, 'Materiali za makedonskata srednovekovna umetnost: Freskite vo svetilisteto na crkvata Sv. Sofija vo Ohrid', *Zbornik na Arheološki muzej na Makedonija* 1 (1956): 37–70.

¹² See Chapter 7.



Fig. 6.5. Theotokos *Nikopoios*, fresco in the prothesis, the Church of the Theotokos Peribleptos (St Clement), Ohrid, 1294–5.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

Christ of the *Ascension* scene. The two aureoles in the hands of Mary and in those of the angels of the *Ascension* in which the golden-robed Christ is enthroned in a rainbow provide a striking link between the apse and vault decorations. The adoration of the angels in proskynesis below the *Ascension* primarily belongs with the *Nikopoios*, but since the images of Christ are vertically connected in the central axis of the apse, the adoration encompasses the entire sanctuary, including that of the *Deesis* in the triumphal arch, also flanked by angels. This vertical axis visually guides the viewer to the Eucharistic sacrifice taking place on the altar table, the ultimate object of the proskynesis. The Eucharistic theme of the apse decoration is complemented by the frontal figures of the Church Fathers in episcopal vestments in the lower register who, surrounding the actual altar table, stand here as co-servants of the liturgy.

The visual focal point of the sanctuary programme of Ohrid is the *Nikopoios* Mother of God, the significance of which in the concept of the programme as a whole, though, has been variously interpreted by art historians. According to Svetozar Radojčić, this is the dominant image of the mural decoration: the aureole is a Christianized *imago clipeata* which is held as a shield by the Virgin, thus

witnessing to the incarnated Logos-Wisdom, the heavenly King.¹³ This sophiological interpretation of the *Nikopoios*, however, was rejected by André Grabar in 1965, arguing that there is no specific reference to Proverbs 9 in the Ohrid *Nikopoios* which would support such an explanation: this Theotokos is a conventional image of the incarnation traditionally taking place in the apse.¹⁴ Twenty-four years later, this position was challenged by Alexei Lidov who focused on the unusual vestments of Christ. Based on the fifteenth-century liturgical commentary of Symeon of Thessalonika, Lidov argued that these vestments are identical with those of the archbishop who consecrates the church. The Archpriest-Christ in the aureole of the Virgin, therefore, is an image of Christ-Sophia who builds and consecrates his own temple and hence the core of the decoration programme of the Sophia church at Ohrid.¹⁵ Lidov's interpretation, however, was questioned by Barbara Schellewald. Firstly, she demonstrated that Symeon's description of episcopal vestments does not match those of Christ at Ohrid. Furthermore, Symeon wrote his commentary on the episcopal vestments four centuries after the creation of Ohrid murals. Although Schellewald accepted that Christ is represented as a priest at Ohrid, in common with Grabar she did not attribute any specific sophiological or other particular dogmatical content to this representation. In her view, this type of Marian image was depicted at Ohrid because of its reference to the Blachernai church in Constantinople where the pre-iconoclast miraculous *Nikopoios* icon was rediscovered twenty years earlier, thus alluding 'to the triumph of the Church of Byzantium in the Balkans'.¹⁶

The fact that the *Novgorod Sophia* icon later integrated precisely this type of Marian image, a point which has been overlooked in the historiography, suggests that this iconography must have had a profound sophiological content. Nevertheless, this assumption needs further confirmation through the analysis of the early images of *Nikopoios*. This will provide with additional information about this iconography and permit a more precise interpretation of both the Ohrid sanctuary decoration and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

The Theotokos *Nikopoios* and Byzantine Imperial Orthodoxy

There are four main groups of existing *Nikopoios* images: (1) seals and coins created between the sixth and the early twelfth centuries (Figs 6.1–6.2); (2) pre-iconoclast encaustic icons; (3) murals, typically in apse decorations with *Nikopoios* in the conch; one of the earliest examples is in the Panagia Drosiani church on Naxos (sixth- or seventh-century), where the *Nikopoios* crowns an idiosyncratic

¹³ Radojčić, 'Prilozi za istoriju najstarijeg ohridskog slikarstva', 357–9.

¹⁴ Grabar, 'Les peintures murales dans le chœur de Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid', 258–9.

¹⁵ Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration'; Lidov, 'Obraz "Khrista-arkhiereia"'.
¹⁶ Schellewald, 'Johannes Chrysostomos und die Rhetorik der Bilder', 187–9. See also Chapter 8.

Deesis composition (Fig. 5.8); and (4) finally, the sixth- or seventh-century manuscript illuminations in the Syriac Bible of Paris (Par. Syr. 341, f. 118r, Fig. 6.6) and in the Armenian *Echmiadzin* Gospels (Yerevan, Matenadaran Ms 2374, f. 229r, Fig. 6.7).¹⁷ In the first two groups the *Nikopoios* is isolated; in the murals, the Theotokos is usually flanked by either angels or saints, whereas in the two illuminations, as we shall see, the *Nikopoios* forms part of a complex iconographic programme.¹⁸ In the *Nikopoios* images, Christ's mandorla can be either oval (more frequently) or circular (mostly in coins). Apart from coins and seals, the Child is almost always represented in full length, but rarely the bust of Christ is placed in an aureole. The Virgin holds the medallion either frontally or on her left-hand side.¹⁹

Art historians interpret the *Nikopoios* depending on what they consider to be its pre-Christian prototype. André Grabar argues that the medallion of the *Nikopoios* derives from the Roman *imago clipeata*, the shield with a funeral portrait which was later adopted by imperial triumphal iconography as an apotheosis motif. Accordingly, the Christian version of the *imago clipeata*, the oval or circle shield with the portrait of Christ or a saint, visualizes the royal glory of a person who is otherwise invisible. The shield in the hand of the Theotokos, Grabar asserts, is an image of the new King, a sign of the incarnated Logos.²⁰ Henri Leclercq associated the *Nikopoios* of the Syriac miniature with the prophecy of Isaiah: 'the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23).²¹

The first critique of the Grabarian interpretation came from Thomas F. Mathews who has pointed out that the Roman *imago clipeata* is exclusively a bust portrait on a plain field which highlights the pictorial status of the person represented, whereas Christ almost always figures in full length, whether standing or seated, 'endowed with life and movement' in the mandorla. His medallion is not a shield but an aureole, which sometimes is made up of concentric colourful circles, traced by Mathews from the early Buddhist art of Central Asia; he argues that it visualizes the radiance, the light of the glory of the Divine Child in the Virgin's arms.²²

¹⁷ For a bibliography on the Theotokos *Nikopoios* see note 7.

¹⁸ The eighth-century fresco in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome represents the three holy Mothers, St Anne, the Virgin Mary, and St Elisabeth with their children in their hands, but only Christ is in mandorla, thus creating a special *Deesis* image. A. Weis, 'Ein vorjustinianischer Ikonentypus in S. Maria Antiqua', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 8 (1958): 23, 36, 37.

¹⁹ A special type of *Nikopoios* iconography is constituted by those representations in which the Virgin holds only the head halo of Christ. This is a very frequent type on coins and seals, but it also appears in the mural icon of Santa Maria Antiqua. See Weis, 'Ein vorjustinianischer Ikonentypus in S. Maria Antiqua'.

²⁰ A. Grabar, 'L'imago Clipeata Chrétienne', in *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, vol. I (Paris: Collège de France, 1968), 607–13; Grabar, 'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine et de la Vierge', 259–60.

²¹ F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, eds., *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. X/2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1931), 2014.

²² T. F. Mathews, 'The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ejmiacin Gospel (Erevan, Matenadaran MS 2374, Olim 229)', in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. G. Garsoïan, T. F. Mathews, and R. W. Thomson (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 208–9.

The third hypothesis is the most controversial. In 1924, Luquet interpreted the aureole of the Theotokos in the two oriental miniatures as a 'representation of pregnancy through transparency'.²³ Although this explanation provoked strong criticism from Leclercq and Grabar, in 1985 Adolf Weis and most recently Valentina Cantone returned to this explanation.²⁴ Both authors listed a series of pre-Christian, mostly Egyptian examples where a female figure holds in her hands her own womb, thus challenging Grabar's main counter-argument, according to which the *Nikopoios's* aureole cannot be her womb, as she carries it in her arms.²⁵ Weis has pointed out the heavenly symbolism of the Virgin's aureole which, in most cases, is blue and sometimes even decorated with stars. Both authors have referred to Christian hymnography and sermons, primarily those of Ephrem the Syrian, utilizing a rich imagery regarding the womb of the Theotokos, calling it the heaven which holds the 'Sun of Righteousness'.

While all these interpretations of the *Nikopoios's* medallion have their relevance, none of them is able to provide a full explanation of the origin and the meaning of the aureole in the Virgin's hands: Christian artists consciously avoided the faithful appropriation of a pagan formula, their primary intention being to emphasize the uniqueness of the Christian dogma about the incarnation of God and contrast it with paganism. Instead, they combined the available iconographic elements, and transformed and placed them within a new Christian transformative context to express a specific Christian message or possibly even to polemicize with pagan ideas. Correspondingly, the real meaning of the *Nikopoios* iconography appears rather within its Christian iconographic context which has been best preserved in the Syriac Bible and in the *Echmiadzin* Gospels.

The standing figure of the *Nikopoios* in the Paris Syriac Bible's miniature is flanked by King Solomon with a book and an allegorical female figure holding a cross and a book (Fig. 6.6).²⁶ There are no inscriptions in this image, but the identification of Solomon goes without saying as the illumination prefaces the Proverbs and the following books of Solomon. Consequently, the female figure on

²³ G.-H. Luquet, 'Représentation par transparence de la grossesse dans l'art chrétien', *Revue archéologique* 19, no. janvier-juin (1924): 142.

²⁴ Cantone, 'Iconografia Mariana e culto popolare nel codice Siriaco 341 di Parigi'; Weis, *Die Madonna Platytera*, 20–37. Cf. Leclercq: 'on se demande quelle imagination malade a pu découvrir ici une représentation de la grossesse de Marie' (Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, X/2:2014.) and Grabar: 'Le Vierge byzantine avec l'Enfant en médaillon ne prétend nullement représenter le Logos incarné installé dans le corps de la Vierge' (Grabar, 'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine et de la Vierge', 259).

²⁵ Grabar, 'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine et de la Vierge', 259.

²⁶ R. Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel von Paris: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, syr. 341: eine frühchristliche Bilderhandschrift aus dem 6. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1991); Meyendorff, 'L'iconographie de la Sagesse Divine', 262–4; H. Omont, 'Peintures de l'Ancien Testament dans un manuscrit syriaque du VIIe ou du VIIIe siècle', *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 17, no. 1 (1909): 93–4.



Fig. 6.6. Theotokos *Nikopoios* between Salomon and Ecclesia(?), miniature in the Syriac Bible, sixth-seventh-centuries. Cod. Syr. 341, f. 118r, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

the left of the Theotokos is usually identified with either Sophia or Ecclesia. The resemblance between the Virgin's and the female's vestments is remarkable, especially in contrast with Solomon's royal garments: they both wear a gold stole over their tunics. The cross and the book are attributes which typically belong to Ecclesia, therefore the two female figures in similar vestments and with identical stoles arguably reflect an intermediate stage of the visual identification of Mary with the Church. A similar idea appears in the apse fresco of the Panagia Drosiani church at Moni on Naxos which below the *Nikopoios* Virgin displays an early type of *Deesis* with the Mother of God and King Solomon on the right of Christ and the allegorical figure of Ecclesia and John the Baptist on

his left (Fig. 5.8).²⁷ Nonetheless, not only the ecclesiological connotation of the Marian iconography creates a link between the Paris Syriac Bible and the Drosiani fresco, but also the sophiological references underpinned by the presence of King Solomon in both cases.

From the perspective of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, this sophiological context of the earliest extant *Nikopoios* images is particularly significant. The publisher of the Syriac Bible, Reiner Sörries, in common with Adolf Weis, links this image to Proverbs 8:22, and, by identifying the left female figure with Ecclesia, he argues that it represents the pre-existence of the Church. This explanation, however, does not stand up to scrutiny, as the *explicit* association of the Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22 with the Church, just as with Mary, was unknown in patristic literature. It was Western theology after the turn of the millennium which emphasized this identification, in connection with the idea of *Immaculate Conception* of the Virgin.²⁸ Instead of this, both the miniature and the Drosiani fresco undoubtedly visualize Proverbs 9:1–11: ‘Wisdom has built her house.’ In the Syriac Bible, the purple vestments (both the tunic and the maphorion) of Mary symbolize her flesh which was taken by the Logos-Sophia incarnating in the virginal womb when he built his temple-Church represented by the figure of Ecclesia.²⁹ The blessing Emmanuel is enthroned in a blue mandorla, denoting both the heaven and the womb, where Christ, the Wisdom of God the Father ‘like a divine seed, shapes a temple for himself’.³⁰

The cross in the hands of Ecclesia is a reference to Christ’s sacrifice, but also that of the martyrs, the ‘sacrifices offered’ by Sophia (Prov 9:2), whereas her book denotes the preaching of Wisdom’s servants (Prov 9:3–4). Together with this Ecclesiological symbolism, the Eucharistic aspect of Proverbs 9 is also present in the image. If one accepts that the *Nikopoios* holds in her hands her own womb that ‘bore the divine charcoal, Christ’, then the Eucharistic message of the iconography

²⁷ Lidova, ‘Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia’, 120–2; A. M. Lidov, ‘Sviashchenstvo Bogomateri: Obraz-paradigma vizantiiskoi ikonografii’, in *Ierotopiia: Prostranstvennye ikony i obrazy-paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul'ture* (Moscow: Feoriiia, 2009), 236–9.

²⁸ K. E. Power, ‘From Ecclesiology to Mariology: Patristic Traces and Innovation in the “Speculum Virginum”’, in *Listen, Daughter: The Speculum Virginum and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. J. Mews (New York—Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 85–110; P. Kern, *Trinität, Maria, Inkarnation: Studien zur Thematik der deutschen Dichtung des späteren Mittelalters* (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1971), 81–92; M. Levi D’Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: College Art Association of America, 1957), 50–1.

²⁹ *Meyendorff* also links the image to Prov 9:1, but he identifies the female figure with Sophia, thus suggests an alternative interpretation of the image with two personifications of Wisdom: Solomon and the female Sophia, both referring to the real Wisdom on the lap of the Theotokos. *Meyendorff*, ‘L’iconographie de la Sagesse Divine’, 262–4.

³⁰ Pseudo-Justin Martyr, *Expositio rectae fidei*, PG 6, 381B (CPG 6218). Translation by I. Perczel. I. Perczel, ‘The Bread, the Wine and the Immaterial Body: Saint Symeon the New Theologian on the Eucharistic Mysteries’, in *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy: Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation*, ed. I. Perczel, R. Forrai, and Gy. Geréby (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 137. The text was translated into Slavonic and popular in Rus, being already present in *Izbornik of 1073* (f. 10r–15v).

becomes striking.³¹ The Virgin elevates her womb, 'the sphere of heaven' as a liturgical paten with Christ, 'the spiritual sun' and the heavenly bread (John 6:51).³² The blessing Emmanuel-Wisdom, enthroned in the virginal womb, invites the viewers not only in the Syriac Bible but also in the conch over the altar in the Panagia Drosiani church on Naxos: 'Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I mixed for you' (Prov 9:5).

This combined sophiological, ecclesiological, and eucharistic explanation of the *Nikopoios* obtains further support by the iconographic analysis of the nearly coeval Armenian *Echmiadzin* Gospel (Yerevan, Matenadaran MS 2374, f. 229r, Fig. 6.7).³³ The miniature illustrates the narrative of the Adoration of the Magi (Matt 2:11). The purple-clothed *Nikopoios* is enthroned in a schematized architectural setting which might resemble a domestic structure in accordance with the narrative of the Gospel, or to a church with an apse separated by two columns bearing a richly decorated semi-circular arch and crowned by a schematic conch. The lyre-backed throne corresponds with the altar table, just as the framing purple curtains with the *katapetasma*, the sanctuary veils. The aureole in the Virgin's hands is blue and the enthroned Emmanuel wears gold himation over the white chiton. They are flanked by two Magi on the left and by a white-clothed angel and the third Magus on the right. The three Magi bring their presents: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Except for one Magus, everybody is depicted frontally being in an eye-contact with the viewer: the result is an image which instead of narration 'invites devotion'.³⁴

The fact that the scene is arranged in an architectural setting indicates both the ecclesiological-eucharistic and the sophiological meanings of the image. The reference to the church building creates a subtle symbolical connection between the Nativity narrative, the Passion and the Eucharist. As the eighth-century Byzantine liturgical commentary, the *Ecclesiastical History* attests to this, the apse of the church 'corresponds to the cave in Bethlehem where Christ was born, as well as the cave in which he was buried'.³⁵ This parallelism between the Nativity, the Entombment, and the Eucharist has a determining importance in the liturgical thought of the East which is also expressed in the Armenian miniature: the Virgin framed by *katapetasma* figures here as a spiritual sanctuary holding her divine Son in white chiton which symbolizes both the swaddling clothes and the burial linen, but also refers to the Eucharist. The three Magi,

³¹ Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History*. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 81.

³² Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History*. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, 87.

³³ Mathews, 'The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ejiacin Gospel (Erevan, Matenadaran MS 2374, Olim 229)'; S. Der Nersessian, 'La peinture arménienne au VIIe siècle et les miniatures de l'Évangile d'Échmiadzin', in *Actes du XIIIe Congrès International des Études Byzantines*, vol. III (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1964), 49–57.

³⁴ J. Lowden, 'The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration', in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. J. Williams (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 38.

³⁵ Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 59.



Fig. 6.7. *Adoration of the Magi*, miniature in the Echmiadzin Gospels, sixth–seventh centuries. MS 2374, f. 229r, Matenadaran, Yerevan.

Source: Macler 1920, f. 229r.

bringing, among others, the myrrh, are the pre-figurations of the myrrh-bearing women who went to the tomb of Christ.³⁶ The angel who directed their way and who is depicted on the right of the Theotokos, corresponds with the angel in

³⁶ Cf. the *oikos* of the Easter: “The Myrrh-bearing maidens . . . cried to each other: “Let us go, hastily like the Magi, let us worship, and bring myrrh as a gift to Him, Who is wrapped now not in swaddling bands, but in a sheet.” Translation by G. L. Papadeas, *Greek Orthodox Holy Week and Easter Services* (Daytona Beach, FL: Patmos Press, 2010), 454.

'clothing as white as snow' at the empty tomb (Matt 28:3) and also with the deacon who proclaims the resurrection in the liturgy.³⁷ The *Nikopoios*, holding in her hand the aureole of Christ as a eucharistic disc, gives a special emphasis to this liturgical aspect of the Nativity narrative. The various examples of apse frescoes with *Nikopoios* convey the same eucharistic message.

On the other hand, the architectural frame also refers to the house built by Wisdom: the Church which is Christ's body. The Theotokos's purple clothes, the symbolic image of the flesh taken by Christ contrasts with Christ's gold himation, which is the symbol of the glorified, redeemed, and deified mankind. In this respect, the aureole can also be interpreted as a shield or a sign with a reference to Isaiah's prophecy which is primarily related to the Nativity: 'the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son' (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). The aureole, however, is equally the sign of Christ's divinity and, as Thomas F. Mathews points out, it 'is intended to emphasize the visionary nature of the Magi's encounter with the Divine Child'.³⁸

Simultaneously with the Eucharistic and ecclesiological ideas, the *Echmiadzin Adoration* miniature visualizes the fundamental Christological doctrine of the union of the Divine and human natures in Christ. Although it can be misleading 'to read a precise doctrinal meaning into a set of rather simple pictures', the anti-Nestorian message of the *Echmiadzin Nikopoios* leaves hardly any doubt.³⁹ By representing the Divine Logos in the hand of the human Virgin, the image does not simply make a distinction between the two natures, but rather it emphasizes their union: in the Divine aureole the human Christ appears, on the one hand, and a human being, Mary, holds in her womb the Divine Light, on the other. The correlation between the incarnation of the Divine and divinization of the human was the cornerstone of Alexandrian theology, from Athanasius of Alexandria onwards, claiming that Christ 'became man in order we may become divinised'.⁴⁰ This soteriological principle led Cyril of Alexandria to speak of the 'inexpressible union' between the two natures in Christ: he called Mary the 'Birth-Giver of God' (Theotokos) and claimed that the 'Word suffered in the flesh' or 'God died' on the cross, i.e. used expressions unacceptable for Nestorios and his followers who considered them as confusions of the two natures and, consequently, Theopaschism, attribution passibility to the impassable Divinity.

³⁷ Translation by P. Meyendorff 1984: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 91.

³⁸ Mathews, 'The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ejmiacin Gospel', 209.

³⁹ C. Mango stressed the ambiguity of the doctrinal message of the *Nikopoios*, while he maintained its anti-Monophysite undertone, by 'laying stress on the distinctness of the natures, on the notion of the *ἀσύγχυτον*' C. Mango, 'The Chalkoprataia Annunciation and the Pre-Eternal Logos', *DChAE* 17 (1994 1993): 168. For the Anti-Nestorian interpretation of the same image: Mathews, 'The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ejmiacin Gospel', 209.

⁴⁰ *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 54.3. Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Sur l'incarnation de Verbe*, ed. Ch. Kannegiesser (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1973), 458.

Further evidence of the anti-Nestorian content of the *Nikopoios* is its Eucharistic references. Recent studies on the Nestorian controversy have revealed the Eucharistic background of this conflict and the strong connection between Cyril of Alexandria's Christology and his understanding of Eucharist.⁴¹ A central element of his theology is his concept of Christ's 'life-giving body': the flesh, which Christ took from the Virgin and also which the believers take in the Eucharist, is life-giving and thus salvific, as a consequence of its union with the Word of God.⁴² Cyril's words on the Eucharist as 'life-giving seed' in those who take communion can be easily interpreted as a textual basis for the *Nikopoios* image, showing the Theotokos with his Divine Son in her womb in a schematic sanctuary: in the Eucharist the Logos implants himself in us 'in order that we may have this for a life-giving participation and that the body of life may be found in us as a life-giving seed'.⁴³

A striking phenomenon is the sixth-century appearance and subsequent popularity of the *Nikopoios* on Byzantine imperial seals, the first of which probably belongs to Justinian I (527–65, Fig. 6.1).⁴⁴ It is tempting to link the imperial context of the new iconography with the contemporaneous Christological debates, in the course of which the doctrine of hypostatic union of Christ's two natures received its precise formulation under the powerful assistance and patronage of Emperor Justinian. The *Nikopoios* on imperial seals, therefore, was intended to proclaim Byzantine imperial Orthodoxy, 'the whole Greek patristic notion of "participation in divine life", of deification, as the real content of soteriology'.⁴⁵

Given that the Christological-sophiological and the Eucharistic themes are so intimately intertwined in the image of *Nikopoios*, it is highly implausible that it was chosen as a central image of the sanctuary programme in the Ohrid Sophia Church solely because it refers to Constantinople's new miraculous icon.⁴⁶ In the

⁴¹ Th. Hainthaler, 'Perspectives on the Eucharist in the Nestorian Controversy', in *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy: Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation*, ed. I. Perczel, R. Forrai, and Gy. Geréby (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 3–22; P. T. R. Gray, 'From Eucharist to Christology: The Life-Giving Body of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria, Eutyches and Julian of Halicarnassus', in *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy*, 23–35; L. J. Welch, *Christology and Eucharist in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria* (Lanham, Md.—Oxford: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994); H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951): 145–64.

⁴² Hainthaler, 'Perspectives on the Eucharist in the Nestorian Controversy', 5; Gray, 'From Eucharist to Christology', 27.

⁴³ *Commentarii in Lucam*, 22.19. PG 72,912. Translation by Th. Hainthaler, 'Perspectives on the Eucharist in the Nestorian Controversy', 5.

⁴⁴ Dumbarton Oaks, BZS.1955.1.4249: 'Justinian I (527–65)?', Byzantine Seal, Dumbarton Oaks, accessed 1 July 2020, <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1955.1.4249/view>. Both the iconography and the inscription are uncertain due to the condition of the seal: W. Seibt, 'Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln, besonders im 11. Jahrhundert', in *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, ed. N. Oikonomidès (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1987), 36.

⁴⁵ J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), 163–4. For the iconography of *Nikopoios* seals: Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 79.

⁴⁶ Schellewald, 'Johannes Chrysostomos und die Rhetorik der Bilder', 187–9.

light of the study of the early *Nikopoios* images, Lidov's suggestion, that this image is a clue to this programme, seems more convincing.⁴⁷ The enthroned *Nikopoios* at Ohrid with an oval medallion, held frontally, follows the earlier iconography. The only, but highly significant, innovation is Christ's golden robes with the unique stole wrapped around his upper body (Fig. 6.3) which was widely disseminated in subsequent Byzantine iconography. In contrast to Lidov's suggestion, however, these vestments are not identical with those in which the bishop consecrates the church in Symeon of Thessalonica's fifteenth-century commentary: that bishop has a white tunic (sindon) and is girded by three bands over his neck, over his breast, and over his hip.⁴⁸ Yet the stole, draped over Christ's shoulder at Ohrid, undoubtedly suggests priestly symbolism and recalls the *Ecclesiastical History's* commentary on omophorion which, unlike Symeon of Thessalonica's text, might have inspired the Ohrid iconography.⁴⁹

As mentioned earlier, this commentary identifies the episcopal vestments with Christ's body. This symbolism directly follows from the idea of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* that Christ is a 'Priest Forever' (Heb 7:17; 5:6) whose priestly service was his incarnation and sacrifice on the cross. It is striking that this description and explanation of the liturgical commentary are only loosely related to the contemporary actual episcopal vestments. Rather they are focused on a theological idea concerning Christ's incarnation:

Then the bishop, by his stole, manifests the red and bloody stole of the flesh of Christ. The immaterial One and God wore this stole, as porphyry decorated by the undefiled blood of the virgin Theotokos. The good shepherd took the lost sheep upon his shoulders: he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed not in a manger of irrational [animals], but on the rational table of rational men. The hosts of angels hymn him, saying: 'Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, good will to men' (Luke 2:14); and 'Let all the earth worship Him' (Ps 65:4); and, heard by all: 'Come let us worship and fall down before him: save us, O Son of God' (cf. Ps 94:6). And we proclaim the coming which was revealed to us in the grace of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰

The description of the *Ecclesiastical History* is certainly not precise in terms of iconography, but this commentary has a very close conceptual relationship with the Ohrid fresco: the stole is the human flesh taken by Christ, its stripes and crosses denote 'the undefiled blood of the Virgin'. Christ, the good shepherd took the lost sheep, the stole, on his shoulder and was wrapped in swaddling clothes—a

⁴⁷ Lidov, 'Obraz "Khrista-arkhiereia"'. See also: Evangelatou, 'Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life', 100–6.

⁴⁸ PG 155, 309–10. Lidov, 'Obraz "Khrista-arkhiereia"', 66. ⁴⁹ See Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 75.

reference to both the Nativity and the Entombment—just as Christ is wrapped in the stole at Ohrid. Christ, who incarnated, that is, was wrapped by the stole of the human nature, sacrificed himself and ‘was placed not in a manger of irrational animals, but on the rational table of rational men’, i.e. the altar table where ‘Christ sacrifices His flesh and blood and offers it to the faithful as food for eternal life’.⁵¹ The angels’ hymn is also depicted at Ohrid: the angels in proskynesis in the lower register of the barrel vault visualize the cosmic glory of Christ’s sacrifice.

The *Nikopoios* above the actual altar table and over the Christ-image, depicted behind the altar ciborium with the Eucharistic bread in his hand, therefore, is the pictorial and conceptual centre of the sanctuary programme at Ohrid. The Virgin holds the mandorla with the Priest Emmanuel simultaneously as a shield-sign, as a heavenly sphere, as an aureole of the Divine glory, as her womb, as the temple of Wisdom and as a Eucharistic disc with the ‘Bread of life’, in accordance with the multi-level symbolism of the *Ecclesiastical History*. The Theotokos carries her Son ‘in swaddling clothes’, as if she placed him ‘on the rational table’ depicted below her as part of the *Communion of the Apostles* scene (Figs 7.2, 7.9). Consequently, the *Nikopoios* in the Ohrid Saint Sophia Church makes a clear reference to Constantinople: it not merely hints to its miraculous icon, but, primarily, this image of the Theotokos is a visual encapsulation of the doctrine of hypostatic union, the corner stone of Byzantine imperial Orthodoxy, traditionally associated with the Constantinople Hagia Sophia.

The *Nikopoios* of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has a very similar meaning and function as she has at Ohrid. The Theotokos does not intercede in the gesture of supplication, as she does in the *Deesis*, but she raises her womb with Wisdom as Eucharistic sacrifice towards the throne of Sophia, the symbolical image of altar. She appears here as the temple of Wisdom, as the personification of Orthodoxy and as the ultimate example of virginal life. The richness of the symbolism of the *Nikopoios* assists the viewers in exploring the different interpretative layers of the Wisdom icon (see Table 2 in the Appendix). The Theotokos, holding the aureole of Wisdom, reinforces the main message of the ‘sophiological synthesis’ of the icon and also that the central idea of the ecclesiology of this icon is the concept of Hagia Sophia.

Due to the lack of visual evidence, today it is impossible to reconstruct the traces by which the *Nikopoios* iconography came from Byzantium to Novgorod. The *Nikopoios* Theotokos at Ohrid, however, was a central image of a highly inventive apse decoration which determined the subsequent development of Byzantine art. This influence was especially profound in Rus where the mosaic decoration of the Kyiv Sophia Church, the prototype of Rus apse frescoes, faithfully follows the Ohrid iconographic programme. Significantly, in the

⁵¹ Translation by P. Meyendorff: *Germanus of Constantinople*, 59.

sixteenth century, Priest Silvestr also linked the *Novgorod Sophia* icon with the Hagia Sophia churches in Rus and their decorations. The eleventh-century frescoes of Ohrid, therefore, require further investigation.

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The iconographical analysis of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has revealed that the icon is a transformed *Royal Deesis* which integrated the allegorical Sophia figure and the *Nikopoios* image of the Theotokos with its intertwined sophiological-eucharistic-ecclesiological meaning. Furthermore, this investigation has also brought us closer to the dating and localization of the icon. Now there can be hardly any doubt about the Novgorod provenance of the iconography as indicated by the historical sources. It is supported not only by the popularity of the Wisdom-iconography in fourteenth-fifteenth-century Novgorod painting but also by the late fourteenth-century adoption of the Balkan *Royal Deesis* image in the same city which remained, according to the present state of knowledge, a specifically Novgorod subject until the sixteenth century. Since in the iconographic development, the direct antecedent of the *Novgorod Sophia* was the *Royal Deesis*, the first appearance of this iconography in Kovalyovo (near Novgorod) in or shortly after 1380, followed by the *Royal Deesis* icon from the end of the century, provides us with a further 'terminus post quem' for the origin of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography. The iconographical analysis, therefore, supports the dating provided by the philological research of the Sophia commentary. Considering the proliferation and dissemination of both the new Climacus-translation (quoted in the Sophia commentary) and the new *Royal Deesis* iconography, neither the icon nor the commentary can be any earlier than the fifteenth century. Since the earliest *Novgorod Sophia* icon is currently dated to the first half of the fifteenth century and the earliest extant manuscripts of the Sophia commentary were written in around the mid-fifteenth century, we can safely suggest that both the *Novgorod Sophia* image and the Sophia commentary were created simultaneously in the first half of the fifteenth century in Novgorod and the prototype of this iconography was undoubtedly connected with the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral.

PART III

IDENTITY

III. Identity

Word and image, commentary and iconography, unequivocally indicate that the *Novgorod Sophia*, in common with the *Deesis*, is an allegorical image of the Church. The *Ecclesiastical History* identifies the Church, the body of Christ and the Bride, with the built church: ‘The Church is the temple of God, a holy place, a house of prayer.’¹ This identification has a sophiological aspect following from the exegesis of Proverbs 9:1, ‘Wisdom has built her house’: Wisdom is Christ and the temple is his body, the visual manifestation of which is the constructed church here on earth. Whilst in Byzantium the ultimate symbol of the Church was the Constantinople Hagia Sophia, in Novgorod, the Sophia Cathedral was the prototype. This concept of the church of Holy Wisdom, which—as discussed earlier—carried a profound theological message, united the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’: Hagia Sophia was identified with the Orthodox Church which Rus inherited from Byzantium, and the church’s dedication to Holy Wisdom articulated this connection with Constantinople.² The same concept appears in Priest Silvestr’s testimony in the Viskovatyi Affair: ‘And grand prince Vladimir ordered that a church of stone be built in Novgorod, Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God, according to the Constantinople custom.’³ That Silvestr links the creation of the Novgorod Wisdom icon with the construction of this Russian Hagia Sophia Church is of crucial importance in terms of reconstructing the message of this icon. The same association with the Constantinople Hagia Sophia, the New Jerusalem, is emphasized by the presence of the narrative of Solomon’s chalice in the block of ten entries around the Sophia commentary.⁴

This part of the book investigates how the Sophia image visualizes the concept of the Hagia Sophia church as a symbol of Orthodoxy. It has been argued that the integration of the figures of Sophia and the *Nikopoios* in the *Deesis* filled the ecclesiological iconography with a sophiological content. Here the icon will be

¹ Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 57.

² Lilienfeld, ‘Das Patrozinium der “Heiligen Sophia”’; Florovsky, ‘The Hagia Sophia Churches’.

³ Bodianskii, ‘Moskovskie sobory’, 20. See also Introduction.

⁴ See Chapter 3.

analysed from a different perspective. It will focus on how the structure of the image and its different iconographic details—without explicit architectural elements—recall a constructed church; how the three-dimensional sacred space of Orthodox churches appears on the surface of a two-dimensional icon. We have already seen that both the *Deesis* and the Theotokos *Nikopoios* iconographies are closely connected with sanctuary decoration, but the same is true for other details of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon: the bust of the blessing Christ frequently appears in the domes, the *Hetoimasia* flanked by angels is usually depicted in either the dome or the apse-zone; finally, the iconography of light is a special means of creating spatial references to church buildings in icons. From this perspective, the sixteenth-century Sophia icon from Solovki Monastery, where the aureole over the blessing Christ has an onion shape, is the most explicit reference to Russian churches and their domes (Cat. 29, Fig. 7.1).

Nevertheless, this part of the book aims not merely to describe these iconographic parallels. Rus church decoration is a visualized commentary on how the church was perceived, as is clear from the Slavic liturgical commentary, quoted earlier: ‘the dome of the church is the Lord’s head; the altar is the throne of God, or, again, the altar is the tomb of the Lord . . . Christ is the head of the Church; the apostles are the neck; the evangelists are the bosom and the feasts are the girdle.’⁵ The coincidence between this text and the classical system of mural decoration of Byzantine domed churches is striking: Christ is usually depicted in the dome; the apostles or prophets are in drum; the evangelists are in pendentives and the representations of the feasts are in the middle zone.⁶ Accordingly, in analysing the relationship between Rus church decoration and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, the prime purpose is to demonstrate what was meant by the Orthodox Church in Rus—how and primarily against whom its true faith was defined—and how this concept of Orthodoxy was visualized. This part is entitled IDENTITY, because it will explore the foundations of Rus Orthodox identity which appear in pictorial form in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon as references to Rus Orthodox church interior.

Accordingly, the focal point of the part IDENTITY will be those theological debates that shaped Orthodox identity in Rus. This analysis will shed new light on some neglected aspects of the debate between the Latins and the Orthodox that led to their Schism in 1054. It will argue the fundamental significance of their controversy over the Eucharist which began in the eleventh century, but for the Orthodox never lost its importance throughout the Middle Ages and even beyond, and, consequently, it exercised profound influence on the development of sacred art in both Byzantium and Rus over the centuries after 1054. Parts WORD and IMAGE have shown not only the ecclesiological but also the Eucharistic

⁵ Afanas’eva, *Drevneslavianskie Tolkovaniia*, 358–9.

⁶ Cf. O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1948).



Fig. 7.1. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from the Solovki Monastery, end of the sixteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

significance of the Sophia iconography. The part IDENTITY will reinforce this claim by demonstrating that the Eucharistic teaching visualized in the Sophia image has a pointed anti-Latin message. It will assert that the Eucharistic doctrine defended by the Orthodox against the Latins constituted the fundament of the

religious identity of the Byzantine commonwealth and thus determined the iconography of Orthodox sanctuary decoration after the so-called Great Schism.

Hence its first chapter (Chapter 7) will discuss the relevance of 1054 for the development of apse programmes of Orthodox churches, by highlighting the importance of the Slavonic Sophia churches in this process. Chapter 8 will focus on the central figure of Orthodox sanctuary decorations, the image of the Mother of God. Following the discussion of the Eucharistic importance of Byzantine Marian iconography in Chapter 6, Chapter 8 will explore the impact that the Eucharistic debates between the Orthodox and the Latins exercised on this iconographic tradition, and, consequently, on the *Novgorod Sophia* image itself. Finally, an outline of the history of mural and icon-painting in Novgorod (Chapter 9) will demonstrate that the pictorial references to church constructions, interiors and their mural decorations in icons had a long-standing tradition in Novgorod prior to the creation of the Sophia icon, the chief aim of which was to express an Orthodox identity that defined its true faith primarily against the Western Christianity.

Slavonic Sophia Churches and the Schism of 1054

The Novgorod Sophia Cathedral was built immediately after the Christianization of Rus, between 1045 and 1050 by Prince Vladimir. Its mural decoration, however, completed in or before 1108, has largely been lost.⁷ Apart from the archangels of the dome and the prophets of the drum (Fig. 11.7) and few other fragments which have been restored, only the fragments published by Vladimir Suslov at the end of the nineteenth century comprising the remains of the praying Theotokos *Orans* in the apse and those of the *Ascension* scene on the Eastern barrel vault are known.⁸

Nonetheless, based on this evidence and other surviving monuments, it is possible to get a general picture of the cathedral's painted decoration. Firstly, there are a number of churches in Novgorod and in the nearby city of Pskov which can provide information about the monumental painting of Novgorod before the fifteenth century (see Chapter 9). More significantly, however, the decoration of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral formed an integral part of a process, started in the mid-eleventh century, in the course of which Slavonic Sophia churches received new painted or mosaic decoration at Ohrid and in newly Christianized Rus: in Kyiv, Novgorod, and Polotsk. In two of these, at Ohrid (Fig. 7.2) and Kyiv (Figs 7.3–7.4), the eleventh-century apse and dome decorations have been almost entirely preserved and are, therefore, of utmost importance from the perspective of our investigations. On the basis of the available information it is clear that the apse murals in the Novgorod Sophia followed the iconographic programme developed in these two Sophia churches.⁹

For the first time, the correlation and significance of the apse decorations in the two Slavic Sophia churches at Ohrid and Kyiv was pointed out by Christopher Walter in 1982.¹⁰ He highlighted a series of their common iconographic innovations,

⁷ L. I. Lifshits, V. D. Sarab'ianov, and T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, *Monumental'naia zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. Konets XI—pervaia chetvert' XII veka* (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2004), 21–97, 183–403.

⁸ V. V. Suslov, *Obsuzhdenie proekta stennoi respisi novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Gl. Upr. Udelov, 1897).

⁹ L. I. Lifshits, 'K rekonstruktsii ikonograficheskoi programmy i liturgicheskogo konteksta respisi Sofiiskogo sobora v Novgorode 1108 g.', in *Vostochnokhristianskii khram; Liturgiia i iskusstvo*, ed. A. M. Lidov (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1994), 164–7; V. D. Sarab'ianov, 'Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii vtoroi poloviny XII veka', *Voprosy iskusstvovedeniia*, no. 4 (1994): 268–9.

¹⁰ Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 193–8.



Fig. 7.2. Fresco decoration in the apse, St Sophia, Ohrid, between 1052 and 1056.

Photo: Alexei Lidov.

most importantly the simultaneous representation of the *Echelon of the church fathers* in the lower register and the *Communion of the Apostles* in the middle one in the central axis of the main apse—a combination which, as we shall see, has no extant precedent in Byzantine art. Walter linked these two sanctuary decorations to a phenomenon he termed as the eleventh-century ‘watershed’ in the history of Byzantine art: they marked the beginning of ‘a rapid development in apse



Fig. 7.3. Mosaic decoration in the apse, St Sophia, Kyiv, after 1052.

Photo: Oleg Gonchar.

programmes from the middle of the eleventh century' in the course of which 'the Eucharistic scenes became the focal point'.¹¹ Walter argued that the eleventh-century 'watershed' had been driven by internal, primarily social processes of Byzantium, whilst he challenged the direct impact of 'the theological issues which were currently

¹¹ Walter, 198, 241.



Fig. 7.4. The mosaic decoration in the St Sophia Cathedral, Kyiv, line drawing.
 Source: Lazarev 1960, plate 1.

matters of controversy with the Latins' on the innovative Eucharistic scenes of Byzantine apse programmes.¹²

In 1994, however, Alexei Lidov proposed a link between these iconographic innovations and the theological conflict which broke out in 1052 and in 1054 led to the mutual excommunication of Constantinople and Rome, the so-called Great

¹² Ibid. 221–2.

Schism.¹³ He asserted that this theological debate revolved around precisely the Eucharist, namely the symbolical question of the use of leaven in Eucharistic bread, the representation of which profoundly changed at both Ohrid and Kyiv.¹⁴ Importantly, the commissioner of the Ohrid frescoes was Archbishop Leo (ca. 1037–56), the author of three Anti-Latin letters on the Eucharistic bread and one of three individuals who were explicitly named in the 1054 papal excommunication bull.¹⁵

Although this link and coincidence in time between the 1054 Schism and the transformation of the iconography of the Byzantine sanctuary suggest an inextricable relationship between the anti-Latin Eucharistic controversy and iconographic development of Orthodox apse decoration, Lidov's hypothesis has been largely rejected or overlooked by art historians. Catherine Jolivet-Lévy has refused this idea by referring to the lack of 'direct allusions' to the conflict with the Latins of the novel Byzantine Eucharistic subjects, as well as to the accepted dating of the evidences (that is, apparently, that of the Kyiv mosaics which was dated by Viktor Lazarev, on the basis of comparative stylistic analysis, for the period before 1040s).¹⁶

Nonetheless, in 2012 Branislav Todić demonstrated the direct impact of Leo of Ohrid's anti-Latin letters on the Ohrid frescoes and dated their creation to the period after 1052 and before 1056, the death of Leo.¹⁷ In their recent monograph on the Kyiv mosaics, however, Olga Popova and Vladimir Sarab'ianov failed to consider these arguments of Todić and their implications for the dating of the Kyiv mosaics, whilst Sarab'ianov ruled out the impact of the anti-Latin Eucharistic debate on their iconography.¹⁸

The reluctance of art historians to acknowledge the relevance of the 1054 Schism for the development of Byzantine art apparently stems from the current historiographical consensus which challenges the importance of 1054, or even tends to downgrade the mutual excommunication of the two churches to a

¹³ A. M. Lidov, 'Skhizma i vizantiiskaia khramovaia dekoratsiia', in *Vostochnokhristianskii khram: liturgiia i iskusstvo*, ed. A. M. Lidov (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1994), 17–27; Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration', 1998. See also: Lidov, *Ikona: Mir sviatykh obrazov v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, 169–236; Lidov, 'Obrazy Khrista v khramovoi dekoratsii'.

¹⁴ For a bibliography of the leaven debate, see below.

¹⁵ E. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid (1037–1056): Leben und Werk* (Bamberg, 2007), 23–70.

¹⁶ C. Jolivet-Lévy, 'Images des pratiques eucharistiques dans les monuments byzantins du Moyen Âge', in *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident*, ed. N. Bériou, B. Caseau-Chevallier, and D. Rigaux, vol. I (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2009), 164. Cf. V. N. Lazarev, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1960). For a bibliography on the mosaics of the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral, see below.

¹⁷ Todić, 'Arhiepiskop Lav'.

¹⁸ O. S. Popova and V. D. Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi* (Moscow: Gamma-Press, 2017), 50–1, n. 79; O. S. Popova and V. D. Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' kontsa X–serediny XI veka', in *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva v 22 tomakh*. Vol. I. Iskusstvo Kievskoi Rusi, IX–pervaia chetvert' XII veka, ed. A. I. Komech (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2007), 211, nn. 78 and 79.

'non-event'.¹⁹ Correspondingly, the debate over the leaven in the Eucharistic bread, the so-called azymes controversy, the main source of disagreement in this conflict, as a rule, has been considered as a dogmatically irrelevant, peripheral polemic and a politically motivated pretext for an escalation of the long-standing contest between the papacy and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.²⁰ As a result, there is a dominant position in scholarship that among the various, chiefly internal liturgical, theological, political, and social factors, which influenced the sacred space of Byzantine apse after the millennium, the conflict with the Latins and especially the anti-azymes controversy was only one and hardly the most important.²¹ A systematic analysis of the azymes controversy from an art-historical perspective, however, has never been carried out, notwithstanding the fact that the mid-eleventh century did witness fundamental changes not only in Byzantine art but also in theological literature. The literary heritage of the Byzantine protagonists of the 1054 polemics over azymes—Niketas Stethatos (ca. 1005–ca. 1090), Leo, Archbishop of Ohrid, Peter, the Patriarch of Antioch (1052–6) and Michael Kerularios, the Patriarch of Constantinople (1043–59)—had an enormous impact on Byzantine theological writing, creating the basis of a vast new literary corpus: Greek and Slavonic anti-Latin literature which continued into the eighteenth century.²²

This chapter, therefore, takes a fresh look at the problem of azymes: it analyses the iconographical programme of the two Sophia churches in the light of the

¹⁹ A. Bucossi, 'Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: An Introduction', in *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation Between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Bucossi and A. Calia (Leuven—Paris—Bristol CT: Peeters, 2020), XIII; Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox*, 240–1; A. Bayer, *Spaltung der Christenheit: Das sogenannte morgenländische Schisma von 1054* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau, 2002), 1–6. For critiques of this consensus: J. R. Ryder, 'Changing Perspectives on 1054', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 35 (2011): 20–37; T. Kolbaba, '1054 Revisited: Response to Ryder', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 35, no. 1 (2011): 38–44; J.-C. Cheynet, 'Schisme de 1054: un non-événement?', in *Faire l'événement au Moyen Âge*, ed. C. Carozzi and H. Taviani-Carozzi (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2007), 299–312; B. Whalen, 'Rethinking the Schism of 1054: Authority, Heresy, and the Latin Rite', *Traditio* 62 (2007): 1–24.

²⁰ See for example: Siecienski, 'Byzantium and the Papacy', 16; V. Grolimund, 'Die Entwicklung der Theologie der Eucharistie in Byzanz von 1054–1453', in *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy: Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation*, ed. I. Perczel, R. Forrai, and Gy. Geréby (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 160; J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 95; G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (München: C.H. Beck, 1963), 278; J. C. S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 159–70.

²¹ Jolivet-Lévy, 'Images des pratiques eucharistiques', 200; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 47, 58–9; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 239–49.

²² For references: A. Bucossi and A. Calia, eds., *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation Between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century* (Leuven—Paris—Bristol CT: Peeters, 2020); Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*; G. Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens: die lateinische Theologie des Hochmittelalters in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Ritus der Ostkirche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 87–103; M. H. Smith, *And Taking Bread: Cerularius and the Azyme Controversy of 1054* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1978).

leaven debate, thus seeking to define their place and significance in the history of Byzantine and Rus art.

A New Byzantine Apse Decoration

To demonstrate the iconographic innovations in the Sophia churches of Ohrid and Kyiv, a comparative analysis will be carried out: the benchmark for this investigation is the slightly earlier apse decoration of Panagia ton Chalkeon church in Thessaloniki (Fig. 7.5).²³ Here the frescoes were created after 1028, but probably before the outbreak of the azymes controversy in late 1052.

The Panagia ton Chalkeon church has an apse decoration with three registers: the Theotokos *Orans* is depicted in the conch, the four holy bishops (the four saint Gregories: G. of Nyssa, G. Thaumaturgos, G. of Akragas, and G. of Armenia) figure in the middle register and the medallions of the holy physicians (John,



Fig. 7.5. Apse decoration, Panagia ton Chalkeon, Thessaloniki, after 1028.

Credit: Ephorate of Antiquities of the City of Thessaloniki, Ministry of Culture and Sports of Hellenic Republic.

²³ Cf. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 82. For the apse programme of Panagia ton Chalkeon: Mantas, *To εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 247–8; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 80–2; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 158–9; A. Tsitouridou, *The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1985); K. Kreidl-Papadopoulou, *Die Wandmalereien des 11. Jahrhunderts in der Kirche Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki* (Graz—Köln: Böhlau, 1966), 17–37.

Kyros, Hermalos, and Thallelaeos) are represented in the lower register, behind the altar table. The standing figure of the praying Mother of God is repeated in the *Ascension* scene of the dome where she, together with flanking apostles, surrounds the blessing Christ in the centre, rising to the heavens.²⁴

The roots of the frontal representation of standing Church Fathers in Byzantine central apsis go back to the tenth century. Prelates decorate the semi-cylindrical walls of the churches in Georgia, Cappadocia, Kastoria, Macedonia, and Peloponnese.²⁵ Of these, the most intriguing is the dated apse decoration of the St Panteleimon church at Upper Boularioi in Peninsula Mani (991–2) which has two apses: the standing figures of Gregory the Theologian and Basil the Great are located in the north apse, in the south one, John the Chrysostom and St Nicholas are depicted.²⁶

An important novel feature of the Thessaloniki frescoes is the representation of the *Communion of the Apostles* on the side bema walls (Fig. 7.6). In common with the nearly coeval apse decoration in the Transfiguration church near Koropi (Attica, ca. 1020–30), Christ distributes bread to six apostles on the south wall, and wine to the other six apostles on the north wall. These are the earliest fully surviving representations of the Last Supper in central bema. Apart from them, there are tenth-century murals of the *Communion of the Apostles* located in one of the side apses in the churches of Cappadocia (cf. Kılıçlar Kilisesi, Göreme) and other regions of Byzantium (cf. Kaloritissa, Naxos), as well as two highly damaged fresco fragments, without certain dating, which may suggest that the *Communion of the Apostles* was also represented in the central bema in the first half of the eleventh, or possibly even in the late tenth century.²⁷

²⁴ For the *Ascension* in Byzantine church decoration (with references): Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 195–201; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 14–15, 26–7; N. Gkioles, *Ο βυζαντινός τρούλος και το εικονογραφικό του πρόγραμμα* (Athens: Καρδαμίτσα, 1990), 161–73.

²⁵ Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 135–59; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 15–35; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, 341–3; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 22–3; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 171–4.

²⁶ Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 243, Fig. 9; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 153; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 18; M. Panayotidi, 'La peinture monumentale en Grèce de la fin de l'Iconoclisme jusqu'à l'avènement des Comnènes (843–1081)', *Cahiers archéologiques* 34 (1986): 86.

²⁷ For the tenth-century fresco in the St George church in Panegyristra, near to Skala (Laconia): Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 130–2, 241; Panayotidi, 'La peinture monumentale en Grèce', 82–3. For the chapel of the Georgian Monastery Ishan (Iskhani) in Tao-Klarjeti (today Turkey, painted after 1006): A. Zakharova, 'Formirovanie ikonograficheskoi programmy vizantiiskogo khrama: vzgliad s prigranicnykh territorii', *Aktual'nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* 9 (2019): 264–5; B. İşler and M. Kadiroğlu, *Gürcü Sanatının Ortaçağı* (Ankara: Bilgin Kültür Sanat Yayın, 2010), Figs 207, 208. For the early examples of the *Communion of the Apostles* in mural painting: Zakharova, 'Formirovanie ikonograficheskoi programmy vizantiiskogo khrama', 264–5; Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 48–50, 168; Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 130–4; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 48–59; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 20–2; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 184–9.



Fig. 7.6. Eucharist with bread, fresco in the bema, Panagia ton Chalkeon, Thessaloniki, after 1028.

Credit: Ephorate of Antiquities of the City of Thessaloniki, Ministry of Culture and Sports of Hellenic Republic.

In the conch of the Panagia ton Chalkeon, the figure of the Theotokos *Orans* creates an emphasized central axis leading the eye up from the actual altar table through to the figure of gold-robed Christ in the centre of the *Ascension* scene.²⁸

²⁸ For the Theotokos *Orans* in the conch of the Byzantine churches, cf. Mantas, *To εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 70–9; Akent'ev, 'Mozaiki Kievskoi Sv. Sofii i "Slovo" Mitropolita Ilariona'; Ch. Belting-Ihm, 'Sub Matris Tutela': *Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte der Schutzmantelmadonna* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1976), 47–9.

The flanking two images of the *Communion of the Apostles* and the pictures of two holy deacons (Stephen and Euplus) with censers in their hands on the side walls above the two east columns underline the Eucharistic message of this vertical pictorial axis above the actual altar: those who participate in the Eucharist will be united with the deified body of Christ, in the same manner as the Mother of God, and will be elevated with Christ to the right of the Father.²⁹

In the two Sophia churches, a similar multi-register apse decoration appears, but instead of the busts of holy physicians as at Panagia ton Chalkeon, the standing figures of the Church Fathers are depicted in the lower register. In common with the St Panteleimon church in Mani, here the authors of the Byzantine liturgies, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, are in central positions (Figs 7.7–7.8).³⁰ A novel



Fig. 7.7. Basil the Great, fresco in the apse, St Sophia, Ohrid, between 1052 and 1056.
Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

²⁹ Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 20–1.

³⁰ Cf. Skawran, 22–3; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 174–7. For the iconographic description and bibliography of the apse frescoes in the Ohrid Sophia church (see also Chapter 6): Todić, 'Arhiepiskop Lav'; Schellewald, 'Ohrid, Malerei'; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 83–4. For those of the mosaics of the Kyiv Sophia cathedral: Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*; N. N. Nikitenko, *Sobor Sviatoi Sofii v Kieve: istoriia, arkhitektura, zhivopis', nekropol'* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008); H. N. Lohvyn, *Sobor Sviatoi Sofii v Kyievi* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 2001); Lazarev, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi*.



Fig. 7.8. John Chrysostom from the echelon of church fathers, mosaic in the apse, St Sophia, Kyiv, after 1052.

Photo: Alexei Lidov.

motif is that the echelons of the church fathers are led by the two holy deacons holding censers: while at Ohrid, they are separated from the church fathers and are represented on the side walls, at Kyiv they form integral part of the echelon of the prelates behind the altar. The frontal figures of the prelates with books in their hands surround the actual altar table as if participating in the liturgy.

In the next register, the *Communion of the Apostles* is represented with a painted altar in the centre, above the real altar.³¹ At Ohrid, Christ appears behind the altar, holding in his left the large stamped prosphora (Fig. 7.9). He is flanked by two angel deacons and the apostles. The altar with angel deacons and leavened bread is also present at Kyiv: here, however, Christ is depicted on both sides of the altar, distributing bread and giving wine to his apostles (Fig. 7.10). That this bread is leavened is highlighted by the representation of the particles of bread in the paten placed on the altar table, surrounded by recognizable Byzantine liturgical vessels, such the asterisk (star, the cover of the paten) and the spear (Eucharistic lance). At Ohrid, the depiction of the sanctuary barrier assists to the visual identification with the Byzantine liturgical space. While in the previous images

³¹ Fragments of a painted altar flanked by holy bishops have survived in the basilica of St Achilleus on the island of Lake Prespa from 985–96. Cf. Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού βήματος*, 242–3, Figs. 6–7.



Fig. 7.9. *Communion of the apostles*, fresco in the apse, St Sophia, Ohrid, between 1052 and 1056.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.



Fig. 7.10. *Communion of the apostles*, fresco in the apse, St Sophia, Kyiv, after 1052.

Photo: Oleg Gonchar.

of the Last Supper, from the sixth-century Riha paten (Fig. 7.11) to the frescoes of the Panagia ton Chalkeon (Fig. 7.6), the liturgical setting was confessionally neutral, after the ‘watershed’ of Kyiv and Ohrid, Byzantine images of the Eucharist make clear visual references to the Byzantine liturgical practice.³²

³² For the Riha paten (Museum Dumbarton Oaks, no. BZ.1924.5): Museum Dumbarton Oaks, ‘Paten with the Communion of the Apostles’, accessed 9 July 2020, <http://museum.doaks.org/Obj23428>.



Fig. 7.11. Paten with the *Communion of the Apostles* from Riha, 565–78.

Credit: Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

The Ohrid conch has the enthroned Virgin elevating the mandorla of her Son, whose figure, as it has been described in Chapter 6, simultaneously reflects the blessing Christ below, holding the leavened Eucharistic bread, and the Christ of the *Ascension* above on the bema vault, in gold vestments (Fig. 6.4). In the Kyiv conch, the Theotokos *Orans* is represented which formerly might have belonged to the lost *Ascension* scene: it is considered to have been located on the bema vaults, just as at Ohrid (Figs 7.3–7.4).³³ The monumental Kyiv Theotokos, therefore, is visually linked with the *Ascension* on the bema vault and with the bust of the *Pantokrator* in the dome.

A further novel motif in the apse decoration of the Slavonic Sophia churches is Christ's priestly symbols.³⁴ At Ohrid they are depicted implicitly, as the stole around the Child's body in the hand of the Theotokos (Fig. 6.3). A second apparent Christ-priest representation in the diakonikon is heavily damaged. At

³³ Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 53–5; Popova and Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' kontsa X–serediny XI veka', 213–14.

³⁴ See also Chapter 6. Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 38–41; Lidov, *Ikona: Mir sviatykh obrazov v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, 275–305; Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration', 1998, 389–97; Lidov, 'Skhizma i vizantiiskaia khramovaia dekoratsiia', 21–5.



Fig. 7.12. Christ as priest, mosaic above the eastern arch of the dome, St Sophia, Kyiv, after 1052.

Photo: Oleg Gonchar.

Kyiv, the representation of Christ as priest has survived intact in the medallion above the eastern arch of the dome, showing Christ tonsured (Fig. 7.12). This Christ-priest representation is located close to the figure of Aaron below, on the north-east pillar (Fig. 7.13), the representative of the Old Testament priesthood, juxtaposed with Christ who figures as the 'eternal priest' of the New Covenant.

Thus, based on the comparison between the apse decoration of the Panagia ton Chalkeon (together with other earlier Byzantine examples) and that of the Slavonic Sophia churches, a series of principal innovations of the latter two can be distinguished. The multi-layered sanctuary programme of the earlier apse decorations has been transformed by the combined representation of two explicit Eucharistic themes on the semi-cylindrical wall of the central bema: the *Echelon of the Church Fathers* and the *Communion of the Apostles*. Their focal point is the painted altar of the Last Supper which is depicted over the actual altar, offering a visual commentary on the Eucharist. As a result, the central axis over the real altar is progressively emphasized and linked with the actual liturgical practice. The frontal figures of the Church Fathers appear as both the pillars of Orthodoxy with book in their hands and as co-celebrants led by holy deacons. It is also without precedent that the distinguishing features of Byzantine liturgy, the leavened bread,



Fig. 7.13. Aaron, mosaic on the north-east pillar, St Sophia, Kyiv, after 1052.

Photo: Oleg Gonchar.

the Byzantine liturgical vessels and vestments, or the sanctuary barrier have been highlighted. The authors of the Byzantine liturgies, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great occupy central positions in the new decorative system. Finally, the representation of Christ-Priest is also an iconographic innovation which can be directly linked to the Slavonic Sophia churches. We have seen that some of these elements had appeared earlier (although in many cases, the dating of the highly damaged frescoes is uncertain), but their unique combination undoubtedly appears in the Slavonic Sophia churches for the first time to exercise a profound impact on the subsequent development of Byzantine church decoration.

The Azymes Controversy and Visualizing a New Orthodox Identity

It is particularly striking that, all the innovations of the apse decorations at Ohrid and Kyiv acquire a concrete meaning in the light of the azymes controversy.³⁵ At

³⁵ For the azymes controversy with further bibliography: T. M. Kolbaba, 'Byzantines, Armenians, and Latins: Unleavened Bread and Heresy in the Tenth Century', in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 45–57; G. I. Benevich, 'Polemika ob opresnokakh pri patriarkhe Mikhaile Kirularii', in *Antologija*

first sight, the azymes polemic was a simple debate about the bread of the Last Supper (Matt 26:17–30, Mark 14:12–26, Luke 22:7–39, and John 13:1–17:26, cf. 1 Cor 11:23–26) and the bread of the Eucharist in apostolic and subsequent ecclesiastical liturgical practice. Whilst the Byzantines insisted that the dough of the Eucharistic bread should consist of flour, salt, leaven, and water, the Latins used unleavened Host for the Eucharist (azymes in Greek terminology), made of flour and water only.

First of all, the dispute over azymes revealed irreconcilable differences between Greek ecclesiology and that of the Roman papal reform movement. The Latins advocated the supremacy of Rome even in doctrinal and liturgical questions, including the use of unleavened Host. Pope Leo IX's response to Leo of Ohrid and Patriarch Michael, the so-called *Libellus*, instead of scrutinizing the problem of azymes, was a proclamation of the Roman demand for supremacy over the universal Church: the pope insisted upon the orthodoxy of Rome from its divine foundation (cf. Matt 16:18), which he opposed to the heresies of the Greeks in the past; he also argued for the doctrinal and jurisdictional subordination of the four other Patriarchates to Rome, which he justified by the *Donation of Constantine*.³⁶ Although historians argue that this letter was never read by its addressees, it is clear from other documents of the controversy that the Greeks were familiar with its main thrust.

This is clear from Leo of Ohrid's first letter, which establishes a continuity between Christ's teaching, apostolic preaching, and the doctrines of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. For Leo, fidelity to the dogmas of the Seven Ecumenical Councils is the guarantee of Orthodoxy, whilst he calls Christ the only shepherd of the Church, thus challenging the doctrinal supremacy of Rome.³⁷ Subsequently, in his second letter, justifying Greek liturgical practice, he outlines an ecclesiastical tradition that started with the Gospels and apostolic teaching, then was transmitted by the Church Fathers (John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, the authors of the Byzantine liturgies), and manifested by the priest celebrating the Eucharist with leavened bread at the altar.³⁸ It is this concept of ecclesiastical tradition that is of central importance in the frescoes of Ohrid and subsequent Orthodox church decoration.

vostochno-khristianskoi bogoslovskoi mysli: Ortodoksiia i geterodoksiia, ed. G. I. Benevich and L. V. Burlaka (Moscow: Nikeia, RKhGA, 2009), 402–20; Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*; Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*; Smith, *And Taking Bread*; J. H. Erickson, 'Leavened and Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 14 (1970): 155–76; M. V. Chel'tsov, *Polemika mezhdru grekami i latinianami po voprosu opresnokov v XI-XII vekakh* (St. Petersburg: Tip. F. G. Eleonskago, 1879).

³⁶ Pope Leo IX, *Libellus*. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 65–85. For the text: Angelov, 'The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium', 94–6, 103, 120; Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 130–7; Smith, *And Taking Bread*, 92. See also Chapter 5.

³⁷ *Letter to a Roman bishop*. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid*, 192.

³⁸ *Second letter concerning azymes*. Büttner, 212.



Fig. 7.14. *The vision of St Basil*, fresco in the bema wall, Ohrid, St Sophia, between 1052 and 1056.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

This idea is highlighted by two scenes on the north wall of the Ohrid sanctuary which represents Basil's vision prior to writing his own liturgy (Figs 7.14–7.15). The textual basis of these two scenes, as André Grabar has pointed out, is the *Life of St. Basil* written by Pseudo-Amphilochius of Iconium (BHG 247–259) which describes the vision of Basil, who prayed to God to receive the right words of the liturgy.³⁹ In the nocturnal vision the Lord appeared to him with the apostles offering the bread and the chalice at the altar and gave Basil the words of the prayers of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Rising from his bed, Basil went to the altar, wrote down the words of the prayer, and celebrated a liturgy. Accordingly, the first scene in the Ohrid iconography represents the sleeping Church Father who

³⁹ Grabar, 'Les peintures murales dans le choeur de Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid', 261–4.; See also: Todić, 'Arhiepiskop Lav', 127–8. This interpretation was challenged by Cvetan Grozdanov and Barbara Schellewald who proposed that John Chrysostom with the allegorical figure of Wisdom is depicted in this scene: Schellewald, 'Johannes Chrysostomos und die Rhetorik der Bilder'; C. Grozdanov, 'Slika Javlanja Premudrosti Sv. Jovanu Zlatoustom u Sv. Sofii Ohridskoj', *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 19 (1980): 147–55.



Fig. 7.15. *The liturgy of St Basil*, fresco in the bema wall, Ohrid, between 1052 and 1056.

receives the divine words in the form of a paper roll from the standing Christ accompanied by Paul, Peter and the other apostles (Fig. 7.14). The next scene shows the officiating church father behind an altar ciborium, reading the Anaphora from a scroll over the Gifts: the leavened bread on a paten and the wine in a chalice (Fig. 7.15). It is particularly significant that the most mystical element of the vision, Christ's and his Apostles' Eucharistic offering at the altar of Basil's church, is also depicted at Ohrid: in this sense, the *Communion of the Apostles* in the apse (Fig. 7.9) is a visionary image, the third scene of the Basil-cycle.

The appearance of the *Communion of the Apostles* in the central axis of the Byzantine sanctuary, therefore, was driven by the demand to emphasize the divine origin of the Eucharistic practice of the Byzantine Church: the priest behind the altar offers the same sacrifice as St Basil who followed the example of Christ, 'the only Shepherd' of the Church.⁴⁰ The representation of the celebrant Christ with recognizable large stamped leavened bread flanked by two groups of apostles is an

⁴⁰ Todić, 'Arhiepiskop Lav', 124–9; Grabar, 'Les peintures murales dans le chœur de Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid', 262–4.

ecclesiological image in which the Head of the Church, Christ, offers his body and blood to his own Body, the Church, represented by the Apostles. That the *Communion of the Apostles* is not a mere illustration of a biblical event is indicated by the presence of the leaders of the Apostles, Paul and Peter, on the two sides of Christ, despite the fact that Paul evidently could not have been present at the Last Supper. In addition, at Ohrid, Paul flanks Christ's right, whereas Peter his left, an apparent Anti-Roman hint, revealing that what is represented here is an image of the Church that follows the correct tradition of the Eucharist.

This message is underlined by the representation of the *Echelon of the Church Fathers* below the *Communion of the Apostles* and around the actual altar table, where Basil the Great and John Chrysostom occupy central place at both Kyiv and Ohrid. It has been frequently emphasized that the echelon of bishops at Ohrid, depicting representatives of all the five patriarchates, including those of Rome, is a visualization of the idea of the *pentarchy*.⁴¹ Nonetheless, in the context of the azymes controversy, the question of the relationship between the patriarchal sees was no longer a mere jurisdictional issue, but impinged on the notion of *orthodoxy* itself. The frieze of church fathers which continues along the walls and into the side apses incorporating dozens of bishops—the authors of Byzantine liturgies, the holy patriarchs and the participants in the Ecumenical Councils—created an image of the Orthodox Church which challenged the Roman concept of papal supremacy. The holy prelates figure here simultaneously as participants in the liturgy and as 'the pillars of Orthodoxy', emphasizing that true worship is the guarantee of the true faith and vice versa.

Furthermore, in the Sophia churches, the *Echelon of the Church Fathers*—the representatives of the five patriarchates and Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils—has a special sophiological meaning: it symbolizes the seven pillars of Wisdom's temple, as 'Wisdom built her house and she supported it with seven pillars' (Prov 9:1). From this sophiological perspective, Wisdom's house is the Theotokos in the conch, whereas Christ as Wisdom 'offers her sacrifices and mixes her wine in a bowl' for his/her servants (Prov 9:2–3), i.e. the Apostles on the scene of the *Communion of the Apostles*.

This ecclesiological controversy not only signified deeply conflicting views on the Church but also brought to the surface some fundamental disagreements between the West and the East regarding the Eucharist, the body of Christ. First, there was a major conflict between the two sides regarding the significance of leaven in the bread of Eucharist. For the Latins, as we shall see in Chapter 8, the leaven was the symbol of sin (cf. 1 Cor 5:6–8; Luke 12:1; Matt 16:6; Mark 8:15), whereas the Greeks regarded the leaven of the New Grace as the living force in bread, since Christ is 'the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the

⁴¹ For the idea of *pentarchy*, see Chapter 5.

world' (John 6:35). Based on the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which contrasts the old Jewish sacrifice with that of Christ, the 'High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek' (Heb 5:10; cf. Ps 109:4), the Byzantines opposed the Jewish unleavened matzos of the Old Testament, i.e. the azymes and the leavened vivifying bread of the New Testament. Accordingly, the Greeks defended their fundamental concept of Christ's life-giving body as the source of deification of men in the azymes controversy.

As it has been mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, the foundations of the doctrine of Christ's life-giving body were elaborated by Cyril of Alexandria in the course of the fifth-century Nestorian Controversy. Five hundred years later, this concept of Christ's deified and vivifying flesh constituted the basis of the highly influential Eucharistic theology of Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022).⁴² A key to the understanding of the azymes controversy is that in Symeon's concept, the leaven is the human soul in the bread which is Christ's Eucharistic body. In his *First Ethical Discourse*, he argues that in his incarnation Christ took on not only human body but also soul to deify the human nature completely:

He [the Creator] made the firstlings of spirit [of life] that He took, together with the ensouled (ἐμψυχος) flesh, into a perfect living soul, forming from the two a human being... Thus, in the same way, having taken ensouled flesh from the Holy Mother of God and Ever-virgin Mary, as a kind of leaven and little firstlings from the dough (φύραμα) of our nature (cf. 1 Cor 5:6), that is, from the soul and the body together, the Modeller and Creator God united it to His incomprehensible and unapproachable Godhead, or rather, He substantially united to our substance the entire hypostasis of His Godhead and... He built this, that is, the human substance, into a holy temple for Himself, so that without change and alteration the Creator of Adam Himself became perfect man.⁴³

Symeon compares the 'ensouled flesh', that is, 'the soul and the body together' which Christ took on from the Theotokos with the leaven and 'lump of dough of our nature'. This comparison between the human nature and the dough has an unequivocal Eucharistic allusion, as it refers to Christ, 'the bread of life'. It is this substantial link between the leavened bread and the human nature that will have a determining significance in the azymes controversy: the Eucharistic bread without leaven is without soul, and if it is without soul, then it is unable to vivify and deify the fallen human soul.

⁴² With further references see: Perczel, 'The Bread, the Wine and the Immaterial Body'.

⁴³ *First ethical discourse*, 3. English translation by István Perczel: Perczel, 136. Edition of the Greek text: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité théologiques et éthiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, vol. I (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 196.

Regarding the incarnation of Christ, Symeon further elaborates on the old Greek patristic concept of deification, *theosis*. Symeon compares the divinization of men both to their creation and to the incarnation of Christ. He asserts that in the same way as the Creator united the spirit of life with the ensouled flesh in order to make a human being, 'he united to our substance the entire hypostasis of His Godhead'. By describing Christ's incarnation, he utilized simultaneously the image of Proverbs 9 and the clothing metaphor: just as Christ built his temple of humanity in which he dwells, so also in him the created persons acquire divinity 'which they put on as a garment of light'.⁴⁴ By eating and drinking the divine mysteries, Christians become 'co-corporeal' with Christ, that is, they will be *consubstantial* with him in his divinized humanity: renewed, reformed, and risen alive.

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of the fact that one of the protagonists of the azymes controversy was Niketas Stethatos, the biographer and follower of Symeon and the editor of his writings. Niketas expounds an idea against the Latins which directly proceeds from Symeon's Eucharistic doctrine. He insists that the bread without leaven cannot be an *antitype* (*ἀντίτυπος*) of Christ's divinized body, because it is dead, lifeless, separated from the living force of Christ's soul:⁴⁵

Consider that unleavened bread has no living force whatsoever in it, as it is dead. In the bread, that is, in the body of Christ, however, are three things which live and give life to those who eat them worthily: spirit, water and blood . . . and these three are one (1 John 5.8): the body of Christ, which thing was declared at the time of the Lord's Crucifixion, when water and blood flowed out of his spotless side, his flesh being pierced by the lance. But the living and Holy Spirit remained in his deified flesh, which we in eating . . . live in him . . . and, in like manner, in drinking his living and warm blood.⁴⁶

Niketas Stethatos equates the leaven with the living force 'in the bread, that is, in Christ's body'; according to him, it is this living force which makes possible the

⁴⁴ Perczel, 'The Bread, the Wine and the Immaterial Body', 139, 152–3. For the clothing metaphor, see Chapter 2.

⁴⁵ The word *antitype* (*ἀντίτυπος*) relates specifically to the gifts of the Eucharist with a meaning of *sign, figure, symbol, or image*. The precise meaning of the term was developed in the course of the Iconoclasm: according to John Damascene, this word is applicable only to the unconsecrated bread and wine. See A. A. Tkachenko, 'Vmestoobraznaia', in *PE*, vol. IX, 2004, 130; Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*, 109; Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 159.

⁴⁶ Niketas Stethatos, *Antidialogos*, 3. 1–2. A. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des 11. Jahrhunderts*, vol. II (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1930), 324–425. For the English translation, I consulted the following publication: J. Covell, *Some Account of the Present Greek Church, with Reflections on Their Present Doctrine and Discipline* (Cambridge: Cornelius Crownfield, 1722), 177. For the Slavonic translation of this text: Chel'tsov, *Polemika mezhdru grekami i latinianami*, 359. For the anti-Latin treatises of Niketas Stethatos in Rus see Chel'tsov, 22–5.

presence of the life-giving Holy Spirit, which remained present even in Christ's dead, but deified flesh. This latter claim, however, namely that the Holy Spirit remained in Christ's dead flesh, was unacceptable to the Latins, as in their view it challenged the fact that Christ truly died on the cross.⁴⁷ Moreover, as the Western theologians argued, Greek liturgical practice with leavened bread was Theopaschism, attribution of suffering to the impassible divinity.⁴⁸

In accordance with the Byzantine position in the azymes controversy, from the eleventh century onwards the iconography of Byzantine sanctuary shows an ever-growing attempt to highlight the divine presence in the Eucharistic sacrifice which makes Christ's body life-giving and deifying. The principal anti-Latin agenda of this novel iconographic programme is vividly encapsulated in Feodosii Pecherskii's letter written to prince Iziaslav I (†1079): '[The Latins] officiate with dead body, thinking the Lord dead, but we [the Orthodox] officiate with the living body of the Lord, seeing him seated on the right of the Father and returning again to judge the living and dead.'⁴⁹

At Ohrid and Kyiv this message was conveyed by the emphasized vertical axis of the apse decoration, leading the gaze from the altar, through the leavened bread, to the Christ of the *Ascension* elevated by the angels to the right of the Father (Figs 6.4, 7.2; at Kyiv, however, as mentioned, the *Ascension* on the bema vault has not survived). This vertical axis becomes a dominant element of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine sanctuary: it links the altar table with the *Pantokrator* figure in the dome surrounded either by the apostles referring to the *Ascension* or by the angelic powers of the heavenly hierarchy. Likewise, the iconography of light gained a new significance at Ohrid: the aureoles around the Christ of the *Ascension* and the *Nikopoios*, as well as the three windows, a Trinitarian symbol over the altar table, are intended to visualize the Symeonian concept of the 'garment of light' as a sign of the divine participation in the Eucharist. The same concept was expressed by the depiction of the heavenly powers. At Ohrid, the frieze of adoring angels is an innovation with a clear Eucharistic message.

The idea that the divinity was not separated from Christ even in his death, was expressed by the depiction of altar offering a visual commentary on the Eucharist (Figs 7.9, 7.10). It is also the Slavonic Sophia Churches where the two angels, flanking the altar table of the *Communion of the Apostles*, for the first time appeared in liturgical vestments as deacons conveying the idea that the Godhead is substantially present in the Gifts of the Eucharist. Closely connected with this concept, by the fourteenth century, the image of the heavenly hierarchy as an imperial court was gradually replaced by the representation of the *Heavenly liturgy*, with the officiating heavenly powers and Christ as Orthodox High Priest

⁴⁷ Will, *Acta et scripta*, 139. See also Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', 94–6.

⁴⁸ Will, *Acta et scripta*, 108.

⁴⁹ Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 509.

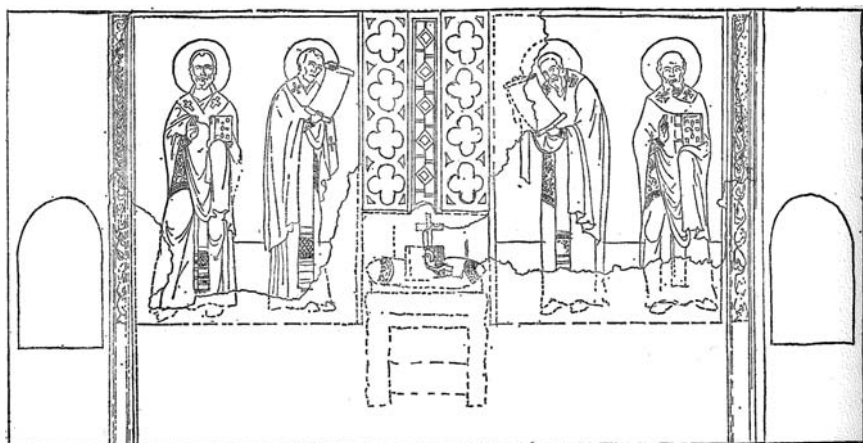


Fig. 7.16. Fresco decoration with *Hetoimasia* and *Officiating Church Fathers* in the apse, Veljusa Monastery, 1080s. Line drawing.

Photo: Miljković-Peppek, 1981, p. 156, ill. 1.

behind the altar, as we have already seen regarding the *Royal Deesis* iconography in Treskavec and in the Marko's Monastery.⁵⁰

A significant innovation in Byzantine sanctuary iconography from the late eleventh century (Veljusa, after 1080, Fig. 7.16; Nerezi, 1164, Fig. 7.17) is that the *Officiating Church Fathers*, previously frontally depicted, turn towards a symbolic image of the altar known as the *Hetoimasia* or 'prepared throne' with the dove of the Holy Spirit together with Christological symbols (the Cross, the Gospel book and the Crown of Thorns).⁵¹ This modification makes explicit a chief argument of the Byzantines in the azymes controversy: what happens on the altar is the 'action' of the entire Holy Trinity, and not Christ's single sacrifice, as the Latins claimed. A hundred years later (e.g. Kurbinovo, 1191, Fig. 7.18), the new Christological image of the *Melismos* took the place of the *Hetoimasia*, the living, naked Christ Child on the altar table who is sacrificed by the officiating bishops. In the period of the Palaiologos dynasty (1261–1453), liturgical spears appear in the hands of the prelates (mostly in the representations of the Prothesis rite), which visualize Niketas Stethatos's words: 'when... his flesh being pierced by the lance... the living and Holy Spirit remained in his deified flesh, which in eating... we live in him'.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Chapter 5.

⁵¹ For the bibliography of both frescoes see Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 84–7. For Nerezi see Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 35–9. For the *Hetoimasia*, see Weyl Carr, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered*, 52–5; Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 35–6; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 38–9.

⁵² The Prothesis rite, which evolved after 1054, contains not only the verse Isa 53:7 quoted by one of the satellite texts of the Sophia commentary, but also 1 John 5:8, cited by Niketas Stethatos against the Latins. For the Prothesis rite, see Chapters 2 and 5.



Fig. 7.17. Fresco decoration with *Hetoimasia* and *Officiating Church Fathers* in the apse, Church of St Panteleimon, Nerezi, ca. 1164 (the *Blachernitissa* in the conch is from the sixteenth century).

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

This brief outline of some aspects of the azymes controversy reveals that every innovative element of the Sophia churches has a direct anti-Latin message. The central axis above the real altar with novel Eucharistic themes expresses that it is only the leavened bread, the life-giving body of Christ which elevates the deified humanity to the right of the Father. The painted altar over the actual altar with angel deacons visualizes the vivifying divine presence in the Eucharistic sacrifice which is the action of the entire Holy Trinity. The representation of the leavened bread, or



Fig. 7.18. Fresco decoration with *Melismos* and *Officiating Church Fathers* in the apse, Church of St George, Kurbinovo, 1180s.

Credit: Josephine Powell photograph, Courtesy of Special collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

later its equivalent, the *Melismos*, in the central axis of the sanctuary echoes the challenge to the Latin ‘dead’ unleavened Host. Christ is depicted as Priest (and later as High Priest) to highlight that Christ’s sacrifice abolished the old Jewish sacrifice with unleavened bread, and also that Christ is the only Shepherd of the Church. The actual Byzantine liturgical vessels and vestments together with the depiction of the authors of the Byzantine liturgies—John Chrysostom and Basil the Great—confirms Byzantine liturgical practice and challenges the Latin rite. The *Echelon of the Church Fathers* stresses that true worship is the guarantee of true faith and vice versa, and also highlights the ideas of Pentarchy and Seven Ecumenical Councils, respectively.

What we can see here is a couple of surprising aspects. Firstly, there is a series of elements common to the altar programmes of the Ohrid and Kyiv Sophia

churches which, at the same time, are fundamental innovations of Byzantine apse decoration. Furthermore, the function of these novel elements is to identify the Christian Eucharist with the liturgical practice of the Byzantine Church. Moreover, each of them can be linked with the Greek arguments in the azymes controversy which broke out in late 1052. Finally, and particularly importantly, these innovations determined the apse programmes of subsequent centuries and constituted the beginning of a long iconographic process in Rus as well as in the Balkans.

All these observations demonstrate that it is hardly possible to separate the creation of both the Ohrid apse frescoes and the Kyiv mosaics from the conflict between Constantinople and Rome which culminated in 1054. As mentioned, in the light of Leo of Ohrid's anti-Latin letters, the dating of the Ohrid frescoes has already been amended to the period between 1052 and 1056.⁵³ One may come to a similar conclusion regarding the Kyiv mosaics. Based on stylistic analysis, however, currently they are dated to the 1040s in common with the frescoes in the same church.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, whilst the dating of the Kyiv frescoes to around 1037 has been supported by external evidences, most importantly by a graffito over the fresco with the date of 1038/1039 (no. 51), the same is not the case for the mosaics.⁵⁵ Apart from stylistic arguments, the hypothesis about the simultaneous creation of the frescoes and mosaics at the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral in Russian art-historical works has been supported by references to archaeological studies carried out in the 1970s.⁵⁶ The cited articles, however, discuss the chemical examination of the fresco plasters only, on the basis of which, therefore, it is impossible to draw any conclusion about the dating of the mosaics.⁵⁷ Furthermore, by demonstrating the presence of earlier fresco decoration under the mosaics in the dome of the cathedral, a study written by Ukrainian archaeologists in 2017 challenged the widely accepted view that the mosaics and the frescoes at the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral were created approximately at the same time.⁵⁸

The post-1052 dating of the Kyiv mosaics, on the other hand, may be supported by the fact that the cathedral was consecrated for a second time, after its first

⁵³ Todić, 'Arhiepiskop Lav', 133.

⁵⁴ Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 27–30; Popova and Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' kontsa X–serediny XI veka', 196–200; G. N. Logvin, 'K istorii sooruzheniia Sofiiskogo Sobora v Kieve', *Pamiatniki kul'tury: novye otkrytiia*. 1977, 1977, 169–86; Lazarev, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi*, 55–9.

⁵⁵ S. M. Mikheev, 'O datirovke Sofii Kievskoi', *Arkheolohiia* 3 (2011): 54.

⁵⁶ Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 30, n. 42; Popova and Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' kontsa X–serediny XI veka', 200; Logvin, 'K istorii sooruzheniia Sofiiskogo Sobora v Kieve', 180.

⁵⁷ Iu. M. Strilenko, 'Analiz zrazkiv freskovykh ta budivel'nykh rozchyniv Sofii Kyivs'koi', in *Starodavnii Kyiv*, ed. P. P. Tolochko (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1975), 195–200; I. F. Tots'ka, 'Pro chas vykonannia rozpysiv halerei Sofii Kyivs'koi', in *Starodavnii Kyiv*, ed. P. P. Tolochko (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1975), 182–94.

⁵⁸ Iu. Koreniuk, R. Hutsuliak, and N. Shevchenko, 'Novi dani do periodyzatsii khudozhn'oho oporiadzhennia Sofii Kyivs'ko', *Ruthenica* 14 (2017): 48–104. A similar investigation of the apse mosaics has not yet been carried out.

consecration following the construction of the cathedral possibly in 1037.⁵⁹ The calendar of the *Mstislav Gospel* (1103–17) states that ‘the Saint Sophia which is in the city of Kyiv’ was consecrated by Metropolitan Ephraim.⁶⁰ According to a recent discovery of a dated graffito at the Sophia Cathedral (no. 3541), Ephraim became the metropolitan of Rus in around 1052.⁶¹

Considering the assumption that Ephraim was the commissioner of the Kyiv mosaics, further parallels between the Ohrid and Kyiv Sophia churches might be explored. In common with Leo of Ohrid, Ephraim was a Greek clergyman, under whose name an Anti-Latin text has survived which includes the problem of azymes amongst a list of the Latins’ errors.⁶² The involvement of both hierarchs with anti-Latin polemics does not come as a surprise considering that one of the traditional focal points of the conflict between Constantinople and Rome was the problem of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Slavs. Furthermore, both Leo and Ephraim were holders of similar new honorary titles: Leo was a *protosynkellos*, whereas Ephraim was a *protoproedros*, both of which expressed the close

⁵⁹ The earliest source which mentions this first consecration taking place on 11 May in an unknown year is an *Apostol* written in Pskov in 1307. A. V. Poppe, ‘Russkie mitropolii konstantinopol’skoi patriarkhii v XI stoletii’, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 28 (1968): 94–5; Lazarev, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi*, 55–7. The current dating of the first consecration is based on the aforementioned graffito no. 51. Cf. Mikheev, ‘O datirovke Sofii Kievskoi’, 54.

⁶⁰ For the evidence of the *Mstislav Gospel*: A. Poppe, ‘La tentative de réforme ecclésiastique en Russie au milieu du XIe siècle’, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 25 (1972): 26–30; Poppe, ‘Russkie mitropolii konstantinopol’skoi patriarkhii v XI stoletii’, 94–6; Lazarev, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi*, 55–6.

⁶¹ For the graffito no. 3541 and its identification with the name of Metropolitan Ephraim: A. A. Gippius, ‘K prochteniiu nadpisi № 3541 Sofii Kievskoi’, *Vostochnaia evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov’e* 28 (2016): 79–81. There is very little evidence about Ephraim, therefore the dates of his metropolitan office are highly uncertain. According to the most recent hypothesis of Andrei Vinogradov, Ephraim was the metropolitan of Rus between 1052 and ca. 1058: A. Iu. Vinogradov, ‘O Khronologii russkikh mitropolitov XI v. (Po povodu novoi gipotezy A. P. Tolochko)’, *Slověne* 8, no. 1 (2019): 477–85; A. Iu. Vinogradov and M. S. Zheltov, ‘Poriadok vstupleniia ierarhov na kafedru v domongol’skoi Rusi i voprosy khronologii pervykh mitropolitov kievskikh’, *Bogoslovskie trudy* 49 (2019): 164–9; A. P. Tolochko, ‘Zamechaniia o pervykh mitropolitakh kievskikh’, in *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi: sbornik k 80-letiiu Borisa Nikolaevicha Flori*, ed. A. A. Turilov (Moscow: Indrik, 2018), 75–87; A. V. Poppe, ‘Mitropolity Kievskie i vseia Rusi (988–1305 gg.)’, in *Khristianstvo i bogoslovskaiia literatura v Kievskoi Rusi (988–1237 Gg.)*, by G. Podskal’ski, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 1996), 451; I. Čičurov, ‘Ein Antilateinischer Traktat des Kiever Metropoliten Ephraim’. *Fontes Minores* 10 (1998): 330–5; D. Blažejovskij, *Hierarchy of the Kyivan Church (861–1990)* (Rome: Universitas Catholica Ucrainorum S. Clementis Papae, 1990), 71–7. For Ephraim see also: J. Shepard, ‘Storm Clouds and a Thunderclap: East-West Tensions towards the Mid-Eleventh Century’, in *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century: Being in Between*, ed. M. D. Lauxtermann and M. Whittow (London: Routledge, 2017), 143–4; Cheynet, ‘Schisme de 1054: un non-événement?’, 308–10; A. V. Poppe, ‘Novgorodskii episkop Luka-Zhidiata: K voprosu o studitakh na Rusi’, in *Visy družby. Sbornik statei v chest’ T. N. Dzhakson*, ed. N. Iu. Gvozdetskaia et al. (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2011), 357–67.

⁶² I. S. Chichurov, ‘Antilatiniskii traktat kievskogo mitropolita Efrema (ok. 1054/55–1061/62 gg.) v sostave grecheckogo kanonicheskogo sbornika Vat. Gr. 828’, *Vestnik pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta. Seriia 1: Bogoslovie. Filosofia. Religiovedenie* 19 (2007): 107–32; Čičurov, ‘Ein Antilateinischer Traktat des Kiever Metropoliten Ephraim’. The authorship of Ephraim, the Metropolitan of Kyiv was challenged by Alexey Barmin, but without conclusive evidence as is admitted even by the author: A. V. Barmin, ‘Protivolatinskaia polemika v Drevnei Rusi: Vizantiiskie paralleli’, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 69 (2010): 129–31.

relationship of their holders with the Patriarch of Constantinople, who at that time was Michael Kerularios.⁶³ These ranks not only indicate the importance of the ministry of the two Greek churchmen in the two centres of Slavonic mission but also suggest that their holders were personally acquainted, which might account for the unusually close resemblance between the apse decorations of the two churches they commissioned. The dedication of both churches to Saint Sophia, Wisdom of God, is also relevant, an act which was due to the initiative of Leo in Ohrid. This dedication primarily expresses affinity with Constantinople and with its primary church, the Hagia Sophia which, in both places, had an apparent anti-Roman undertone. At the same time, the dedication to Wisdom had a clear impact on the anti-Latin iconography of the new apse decoration of the two Sophia Churches, which again implies collaboration between their commissioners.

To conclude, the comparative analysis of the apse programmes of the two Sophia churches has shown that they visualize a new concept of Orthodoxy which defined the true faith primarily in relation to Western Christianity. This alone undermines the premise that the religious controversy of 1054 was doctrinally insignificant. Furthermore, it is not coincidental that the earliest examples of the new Orthodox sanctuary decorations have been preserved in the large centres of Slavonic mission, a traditional source of conflict between Rome and Byzantium. As Jean-Claude Cheynet has pointed out, due to the historical context, the crisis of 1054 did not contribute to a hostility towards the Latins in Constantinople itself. This situation, however, was in a sharp contrast to that in the Slavic ecclesiastical centres, the fields of potential rivalry between the Greek and the Latin churches.⁶⁴ Consequently, it is not necessary to look for lost Constantinopolitan prototypes behind these apse programmes.⁶⁵ In addition, the hierarchs of these ecclesiastical centres belonged to the most influential and closely-knit circles of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, being at the same time the central figures for Byzantine anti-Latin polemics.⁶⁶ This applies not only to Leo but also to Ephraim. Therefore, there is every indication that the evidence of the *Mstislav Gospel* about the re-consecration of the cathedral by Ephraim is connected with the new mosaic decoration of the church which was commissioned by him.

⁶³ For Leo as *protosynkellos*: Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid*, 24; V. Grumel, 'Titulature de Métropolités Byzantins, I: Les métropolités syncelles', *Études byzantines* 3 (1945): 96. For Ephraim as *protoproedros*: Čičurov, 'Ein Antilatinischer Traktat des Kiever Metropoliten Ephraim', 330–2; V. L. Iarin, *Aktovye pečati drevnei Rusi X–XV vv.*, vol. I. Pečati X–nachala XIII v. (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 44–7. For these ranks: Grumel, 'Titulature de Métropolités Byzantins, I', 104–6.

⁶⁴ Cheynet, 'Schisme de 1054: un non-événement?', 311.

⁶⁵ Cf. for example: Popova and Sarab'ianov, *Mozaiki i freski Sviatoi Sofii Kievskoi*, 48; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 193.

⁶⁶ Cf. E. Naxidou, 'The Archbishop of Ohrid Leo and the Ecclesiastical Dispute Between Constantinople and Rome in the Mid 11th Century', *Cyrrillomethodianum* 21 (2016): 7–19.

Ephraim, similarly to Leo, used not only words but also images to promote the Byzantine position in the debate over azymes.

Although art historians, overlooking the significance of the debate over azymes, traditionally link the great innovations of Byzantine Eucharistic iconography with the twelfth-century internal Byzantine Eucharistic debates, it is clear that these processes started earlier, already in the eleventh century. It was the so-called 'eleventh-century watershed' which marked the beginning of a new trend in Byzantine art, the anti-Latin tenet of which is now hardly questionable.⁶⁷ Furthermore, it is striking that the leading figures of the various Byzantine theological conflicts after 1054 were very often at the same time protagonists of anti-Latin polemics.⁶⁸ All these facts imply that the problem of azymes was not simply relevant, but became one of the main stimulators of Byzantine theological thought as well as the fundamental driving force of liturgical and iconographic developments after 1054. Moreover, the reconsideration of the azymes debate can also resolve the contradiction that despite the lack of Slavonic translations of the texts relating to Byzantine theological debates, monumental painting in Rus follows the main trends of Byzantine Eucharistic iconography.

This new Orthodox identity which was depicted at Kyiv, found also expression in written form. The famous, possibly late eleventh-century, narrative of the *Primary Chronicle* (under year 987) relates how Grand Prince Vladimir the Great (980–1015) settled on Byzantine Orthodoxy as the faith for Rus.⁶⁹ According to this text, it was not the theological reasoning of the anonymous Greek Philosopher (who certainly mentioned the problem of azymes), but the sharp contrast between the rituals of the different religions which convinced the Kyiv Grand Prince to choose Orthodoxy. After the description of the solemn service held for the Rus emissaries in Constantinople (according to a later Greek version of the legend, in the Hagia Sophia itself), the *Chronicle* quotes the Rus perception of this ceremony:⁷⁰

⁶⁷ For the relationship between the twelfth-century Byzantine Eucharistic debates and Eucharistic iconography see Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 37–9; Sarab'ianov, 'Programmnyye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii'; A. L. Townsley, 'Eucharistic Doctrine and the Liturgy in Late Byzantine Painting', *Oriens Christianus* 58 (1974): 138–53; G. Babić, 'Les discussions christologiques et le décor des églises byzantines au XII siècle', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 2 (1968): 368–86. Doubts about this hypothesis were expressed by Lidov and Gerstel: Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration', 1998, 381; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 44–7. See also Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', 102–13.

⁶⁸ H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1959), 609–29, 663–89, 712–73.

⁶⁹ D. S. Likhachev, ed., *Povest' vremennykh let* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1996), 48–9. For the dating of this passage: Likhachev, 457–8.

⁷⁰ For the so-called Banduri-legend: A. A. Turilov, "Bandurieva Legenda", in *PE*, vol. IV, 2002, 313. See also: A. M. Lidov, 'Nebo na zemle: Chto uvideli posly kniazia Vladimira v Sofii Konstantinopol'skoi?', in *Vladimirskii sbornik*, ed. V. V. Maiko and T. Iu. Iashaeva (Kaliningrad: ROST-DOAFK, 2016), 145–6.

Then we went among the Germans [Latins], and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations.⁷¹

The words of the envoys reflect the Church definition of the *Ecclesiastical History*: 'The church is an earthly heaven.'⁷² Correspondingly, the text asserts that the Church is there where the right worship is maintained. Significantly, the beauty of Byzantine ceremony is demonstrated by its juxtaposition with the Latin (together with the Muslim) rituals.

The relevance of the apse decorations of the Slavonic Hagia Sophia churches, therefore, is not limited to being a powerful prototype of Byzantine and Rus apse iconographies for many centuries. Even more significant is that they provide a vivid visualization of a new Orthodox identity in which true faith, Byzantine ritual, anti-Latin polemics and the concept of Hagia Sophia church were inextricably intertwined.

⁷¹ S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, Ma.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 111.

⁷² Quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History*. Translation by P. Meyendorff: Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 57.

Leaven and Byzantine Marian Iconography

The Marian Aspect of the Azymes Controversy

The Marian aspect of the azymes debate has never been studied. The Western and Eastern Marian interpretations of leaven during this debate, however, reveal how far apart the Latin and Greek understandings of the Eucharist were in the second millennium. This chapter will pursue that the understanding of the Eucharist is intimately connected with Mariology, hence the leaven debate provides a wealth of hitherto unexploited material for the study of Marian iconography in Byzantium and Rus.¹ This investigation will also prove that the analysis of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon in the context of Byzantine Eucharistic doctrine advocated in the leaven debate is based not on a mere speculation but leads to the very essence of the Wisdom iconography.

There are two key elements of this complex conflict which must be considered in order to understand the Marian aspect of the azymes controversy. The first is that, at the time of the outbreak of the azymes controversy, the Eucharistic doctrine was the focal point of theological thought in both the West and the East. In the West, the dispute with Berengar of Tours (†1088) over Christ's real presence in the Eucharist led to the formulation of the doctrine of *transubstantiation* of the Eucharistic Gifts: 'The bread and wine which are placed on the altar are substantially changed, through the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words of our Redeemer, into the true, the life-giving, the very own flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.'² According to this teaching, in the Eucharistic offering, the substance of bread changes into the substance of the body of Christ and the substance of wine into the substance of his blood.

In the East, however, Symeon the New Theologian developed an influential Eucharistic theology in which he formulated the concept of substantial participation in the divine in the Eucharist, which implied the *consubstantiality* between the human nature and the bread.³ These two ideas resulted in two contradicting,

¹ In her recent article, Maria Evangelatou has highlighted the neglected Eucharistic significance of Byzantine Marian iconography, where she has briefly touched upon the problem of azymes: Evangelatou, 'Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life', 109–11.

² *Berengar's Oath of 1079*. J. F. McCue, 'The Doctrine of Transubstantiation from Berengar through Trent: The Point at Issue', *Harvard Theological Review* 61 (1968): 387.

³ See Chapter 7 and Perczel, 'The Bread, the Wine and the Immaterial Body', 135–6; I. Perczel, 'Saint Simeon the New Theologian and the Theology of the Divine Substance', *Acta Antiqua Hungarica* 41 (2001): 125–46.

irreconcilable perceptions of the Eucharist which hindered not merely any agreement, but the very possibility of comprehension of each other's position.

Symeon the New Theologian's disciple, Niketas Stethatos asserted that the leavened bread is *consubstantial* with man having an ensouled body.⁴ By virtue of Christ's incarnation, men became *consubstantial* with Christ, and in the Eucharist, they can be co-corporeal with him, consequently, they can participate not only in his humanity but also in his divinity, which are inseparable in Christ. The azyme, however, as it is not real bread, lacks the life-giving power of leaven and therefore it is not *consubstantial* with men and unable to deify. In contrast, the bread with leaven, already *prior to* its consecration, is the '*antitype* (*ἀντίτυπος*) of the Lord's living body'.⁵

For the Latins, on the basis of their doctrine of *transubstantiation*, this was an incomprehensible reasoning. They could not accept Niketas's main thesis about the *consubstantiality* between bread and human nature. They challenged the Greek idea that 'in the leavened bread there is a soul without the mystery of the Lord's passion'.⁶ In Latin Eucharistic thought, Niketas's claim that the bread 'is an *antitype* of the Lord's living body' did not make any sense, as after the consecration the substance of the bread necessarily changes—it will not be bread anymore, but the Body of Christ. They considered the consecrated host as *supersubstantial* to bread, having different substances.

Thus, two contradicting views on the relationship between humanity and Eucharist clashed in the azymes controversy. The Greeks did not believe in the change of the substance of the bread: in their view, 'humanity changed into the transfigured humanity of Christ' in the Eucharistic mystery.⁷ The question of bread is the question of Christ's humanity, hence for the Orthodox, it was a fundamental Christological issue. For the Latins, the problem of the ingredients of the Eucharistic bread was no more than a problem of symbolism, being the bread's substance changed after the consecration. For this very reason, the Latins proved to be more tolerant in this debate than the Greeks, especially in the period of mature scholasticism.⁸ Furthermore, most modern scholars, including both the Orthodox and the Byzantinists, often have looked at the azymes controversy through the Latins' eyes and consider it as a debate over symbolical questions which it was, indeed, for the Latins, but not for the Greeks. This is the main reason for the scholarly neglect of the azymes controversy despite its crucial importance.

⁴ *Antidialogus*, 2,1. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 323. See also Erickson, 'Leavened and Unleavened', 158–65; Smith, *And Taking Bread*, 68.

⁵ *Contra Latinos et Armenios*, 13. J. Hergenröther, *Monumenta Graeca ad Photium ejusque historiam pertinentia* (Regensburg: G. J. Manz, 1869), 151–2. See also Chapter 7.

⁶ *Dialogus*, XX. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 104. Cf. Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*, 157–8.

⁷ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 205.

⁸ Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*, 303–72.

The second key issue is that leaven was interpreted differently in the West and the East which is again not a mere symbolical matter, but the consequence of different Christological and Mariological premises. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (5:6–8) and, likewise, in other places of the Gospels (cf. Luke 12:1; Matt 16:6; Mark 8:15), the leaven appears as a symbol of sin. Accordingly, the greatest concern of the Latins regarding the leaven was the fact that it denotes the fallen state of men.⁹ Christ's body, however, was free from corruption and sin, therefore, the Latins argued against the celebration with leaven in the Eucharist.¹⁰

For the Greeks, in accordance with their doctrine of theosis, leaven was the symbol of living soul in bread: the lack of leaven is the sign of imperfection; what is without soul is lifeless, dead, and incomplete, therefore bread without leaven is incomplete and cannot be life-giving. Leo of Ohrid distinguished two types of leaven in the Bible: the old which is the symbol of sin and the new denoting virtue, as it appears in the parable, comparing the leaven with the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:33; cf. Luke 13:20–1).¹¹ Therefore, for the Byzantines, the bread without leaven is the symbol of the old Law which waits for fulfilment through Christ in the new Grace.¹² Christ is the 'living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:51) who elevates, vivifies, and raises up those who eat it.

The Marian aspect of the Azymes controversy was first raised by Niketas Stethatos against the Armenians at the very beginning of the conflict, in the context of his fundamental argument labelling the use of unleavened bread as Apollinarism, i.e. heresy which denies Christ's human soul: 'Now, whoever . . . partakes of azymes unwittingly runs the risk of falling into the heresy of Apollinaris. For the latter dared to say that Christ received only a body without soul and mind from the holy Virgin Mary, which is a dead flesh.'¹³

In a response to this accusation, the Latins expounded an interpretation of the unleavened Eucharist. The consecrated host is the symbol of the immaculate conception of Christ in the womb of the Virgin, in which the water denotes the rational soul, the flour is the flesh and the fire, by which the host is baked, symbolizes the divinity. This image of the Virgin's womb as a place where the host is baked became widely disseminated in the medieval West. It appears, among others, in one of the most popular late medieval literary texts of the West, the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*: 'Today the living bread that animates the

⁹ For the debate over symbolism of bread and leaven: Avvakumov, 108–11, 146–57; Chel'tsov, *Polemika mezhdru grekami i latinianami*, 202–11, 260–91.

¹⁰ *Dialogus*, XLIV. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 117. See also: Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*, 154.

¹¹ Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid*, 216–18.

¹² *Letter to Dominic of Grado*, 9. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 215. PG 120, 764B. Translation by M. H. Smith: Smith, *And Taking Bread*, 56.

¹³ *Contra Latinos et Armenios*, 13. Hergenröther, *Monumenta Graeca*, 151. Cf. Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', 88–94.

world has begun to be baked in the oven of the virginal womb.’¹⁴ The popularity of the image was rooted in the fact that it was a vivid illustration of two central ideas of Western theology: *transubstantiation* and the immaculacy of the Virgin, i.e. her freedom from Original Sin. The latter is the main polemical message of the symbolism presented by the Latins: the flesh of the Son of God ‘was conceived without sin from the unblemished Virgin’, whose soul was as ‘clear and noble’ as the water added to the flour, this is why ‘the azyme bread is baked from clean dough without leaven’.¹⁵

As part of their polemics against the Latin understanding of the Eucharist, the Greeks developed their explanation of leaven, the foundation of which was laid by Leo of Ohrid. About one or two decades after the Schism of 1054, in the 1060s or 1070s, probably in the context of an actual debate with the Latins, Leo (Leontii), the metropolitan of Pereiaslav in Rus, himself a Greek, combined Leo of Ohrid’s exegetical-moral reasoning with the Byzantine Christological argument about the leavened bread as the only *antitype* of Christ’s ensouled and life-giving body.¹⁶ He returned to the sixth-century Christological formulas and described the hypostatic union of Christ with the image of leaven and dough: he named Christ’s deified manhood the leaven which leavened, i.e. deified the dough of the whole mankind.¹⁷ According to his reasoning, mankind was leavened by the ancestral sin, then it became unleavened, dead to sin, through the death of Christ, in order to become leavened again, that is deified in the communion with Christ.¹⁸ Leo of Pereiaslav, therefore, directly links the doctrine of Christ’s hypostatic union with the use of leavened Eucharistic bread, which led him to label the Latins as Nestorians: ‘those who eat azymes do not confess Christ as God and man and does not accept his deified body, and in common with the insane Nestorios, they regard the Creator of the whole world as a simple man’.¹⁹

A further refinement of this argument can be found in a late eleventh-century polemical treatise on azymes written by Nicholas of Andida, the author of the

¹⁴ *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, IV. M. Stallings-Taney, ed., *Meditaciones vite Christi/Iohannes de Caulibus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 23. Translation by I. Ragusa: I. Ragusa and R. B. Green, eds., *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 33. For further examples of the oven metaphor: E. Gertsman, ‘Image as Word: Visual Openings, Verbal Imaginings’, *Studies in Iconography* 32 (2011): 64. This idea is directly expressed in the iconography of the so-called *Shrine Madonna*, the wooden statue representing the Virgin and portraying the Eucharistic Trinitarian image of the Throne of Mercy within her body.

¹⁵ *Dialogus*, XXXI. Will, *Acta et scripta*, 107–8. See also: Innocent III, *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti eucharistiae*, PL 217, 857D.

¹⁶ *K rimlianam, ili latinianam, ob opresnokakh* [To the Romans or Latins on azymes]. Edition: V. N. Beneshevich, *Pamiatniki drevne-russkogo kanonicheskogo prava*, vol. II/1, RIB, vol. XXXVI (Petrograd: Izd. Arkheograficheskoi komissii, 1920), 73–101. See also: Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 242–6; M. V. Bibikov, *Byzantinorossica: Svod vizantiiskikh svidetel'stv o Rusi* (Moscow: Iazyki slaviansoi kul'tury, 2004), 327–31.

¹⁷ Cf. Leontios of Jerusalem (ca. 485—ca. 543), *Adversus Nestorianos*, I, 18. PG 86, 1468BC. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 58.

¹⁸ Beneshevich, *Pamiatniki*, II/1:93.

¹⁹ Beneshevich, II/1:93–4.

Protheoria, the famous Byzantine liturgical commentary.²⁰ This text, only partially published by Jean Darrouzès, reflects an actual debate with the Latins which took place in Rhodes at the very end of the eleventh century. The author makes it clear that his views on ancestral sin differ from those of the Latins and he does not share the Augustinian concept of Original Sin: although the leaven is the symbol of Adam's soul defiled by the sin, Nicholas argues, the human soul did not become bad in its *nature*, as evil is a consequence of disobedience and sin. Therefore, in accordance with the two Leos, he asserts that the leaven, just as the soul, can be good, as for example it is in the aforementioned parable of leaven (Matt 13:33).

Nicholas also points out another disagreement between West and East regarding the consequences of the ancestral sin. He teaches that even the Theotokos, who was free from sin, 'did not remain fully free from the curse caused by the transgression of Adam and Eve, even if she acquired for everyone not only the cancellation of the curse, but also the beginning of the blessing'.²¹ This claim must have been levelled against the Latins who emphasized many times during the azymes controversy that the Virgin was completely free from any stain of Original Sin. The Orthodox, however, did not share this view, nor the Latins' concern regarding the purity of the ingredients of the Eucharistic bread, as not only this passage, but the entire azymes controversy bears witness: the leaven as a symbol of the soul does not necessarily denote sin and corruption; moreover, even the Virgin, who was without sin, bears the consequences of the fall of mankind, being herself subject to the curse caused by it. Instead, the Byzantines' emphasis was on the fullness and completeness of the humanity of Christ, received from Mary and symbolized by the leavened bread, as this fullness and completeness was the pre-requisite of its deification.

Conversely, the Latins' position was that the womb in which the Divine Logos was conceived by the Holy Spirit was preserved completely immaculate, and the host, consecrated by the Holy Spirit in the altar, must symbolize this immaculacy.²² It is this idea which is formulated in the words of Anselm of Canterbury, cited many times by the Latins in the course of the azymes controversy: 'Christ assumed a sinless human nature from the sinful dough, as something unleavened is taken from something leavened'.²³ Unsurprisingly, Anselm wrote these words in the defence of the doctrine of the *Immaculate Conception* of the Virgin. This indicates that the symbolic interpretation of the unleavened host as a 'sinless human nature' which is taken 'from the sinful dough' is the Eucharistic aspect of

²⁰ J. Darrouzès, 'Nicolas d'Andida et les Azymes', *Revue des études byzantines* 32 (1974): 199–210.

²¹ Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 274.

²² Innocent III, *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti eucharistiae*, PL 217, 857D. Cf. Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens*, 152.

²³ Anselm of Canterbury, *De conceptu virginali et originali peccato*, XXI, PL 158, 452C; Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, 2, XVI, PL 158, 416B; Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis*, XXII, PL 170, 51C; Sicard of Cremona, *Mitræ, sive Summa de officiis ecclesiasticis*. PL 213, 118D; Pope Innocent III, *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti eucharistiae*, IV, PL 217, 857D.

the concept of the exemption of the Virgin from Original Sin and her unique separation from the sinful mass of mankind. Furthermore, from Pope Innocent III's explanation it is clear that this idea also had an ecclesiological aspect: the azyme, free from 'old leaven or any other defilement', represents that 'no malice and wickedness stand between Christ and his people', that is the Roman Church.²⁴

The Theotokos *Blachernitissa-Znamenie* as a Eucharistic Image

Byzantine Marian iconography, in contrast to Western one, didn't aim to emphasize Mary's uniqueness. Instead through the figures of the Mother of God and her son, it visualized the union of the human and the divine natures in the incarnated Christ. The analysis of the azymes controversy has revealed that Byzantine theology's primary concern was to highlight the completeness and non-uniqueness of Mary's humanity which was divinized through the incarnation of Christ. For this reason, the Byzantines never identified the Theotokos with Sophia, as did Western theology.²⁵ Verse Proverbs 9:1, describing Wisdom-Christ who has built her/his temple in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was a powerful image to express their doctrine of theosis and the *Nikopoios* image was a visualization of this theological concept. Arguably, the *Nikopoios* in the apse of the Sophia Church of Ohrid (Fig. 6.3) represents the *quintessence* of Byzantine Eucharistic teaching maintained by the Greeks in the azymes controversy. Being an established image of the hypostatic union, a symbol of Byzantine imperial Orthodoxy, the *Nikopoios* was intended to juxtapose the divine nature and the deified humanity that were in perfect union in Christ.

What is particularly interesting is, however, that the azymes controversy provides an explanation of not only the choice of the *Nikopoios* Theotokos at Ohrid but also its disappearance from Byzantine iconography after the eleventh century. Although in the second half of the first millennium the *Nikopoios* was extremely common in Byzantine coins and seals, a modified version appeared in the eleventh century which gradually superseded the original image: while the *Nikopoios* holds in her hands the aureole of Christ, in the novel image, the Theotokos appears in orans, with arms raised, thus, the Child in the mandorla is supernaturally hovering on her chest (Fig. 8.1).²⁶ It is a combination of the *Nikopoios* and the *Orans* Theotokos, both linked by written sources or inscriptions

²⁴ Pope Innocent III, *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti eucharistiae*, IV. PL 217, 857D.

²⁵ K. J. Heerlein, 'Sophia-Sapientia: Ikonographische Studien' (Dissertation, Munich, 2000), 190–5.

²⁶ For the *Blachernitissa (Znamenie)* iconography: Evangelatou, 'Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life', 106–15; A. Kriza, 'Bogomater' "Znamenie" i prenie ob opresnokakh', *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 103 (2019): 190–204; M. Tatić-Đurić, *Studije o Bogorodici* (Belgrade: Jasen, 2007), 178–98; I. A. Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii* (Moscow: Indrik, 2005), 309–11, 358–67; E. N. Papaioannou, 'The "Usual Miracle" and an Unusual Image: Psellos and the Icons of Blachernai', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 51 (2001): 177–88; B. Pitarakis, 'À propos de l'image de La Vierge

to the Blachernai Church in Constantinople, similarly to the new icon which was once labelled *Blachernitissa* in an eleventh-century lead seal, but received the popular name *Episkepsis*, then *Platytera* in Greek and *Znamenie* in Rus in the later centuries.²⁷ The first dated example of this iconography is the coin of empresses Theodora and Zoe from 1042, but its authenticity was disputed by Werner Seibt.²⁸ The next dated item with the image of *Blachernitissa* is the lead seal of Empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa (1059–1067) which may be one of the earliest occurrences of the new Theotokos iconography.²⁹

The closer connection of the *Nikopoios* and the *Blachernitissa* with the Blachernai, an exceptional treasury of Marian relics and site of famous miracles, led scholars to interpret the new *Blachernitissa-Znamenie* icon as an abstract image of the so-called *Usual miracle* that occurred each Friday in the same church.³⁰ This hypothesis is based upon a supposed identification of the

orante avec le Christ-Enfant (XIe–XIIe siècles): L'émergence d'un culte', *Cahiers archéologiques* 48 (2000): 45–58; Baltoyanni, 'The Mother of God in Portable Icons', 139–41; R. G. Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', in *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. R. G. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 91–109; E. S. Smirnova, 'Novgorodskaja ikona "Bogomater" Znamenie': Nekotorye voprosy bogorodichnoi ikonografii XII v.', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Balkany. Rus'*, ed. O. E. Etingof and A. I. Komech (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1995), 288–310; Weyl Carr, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered*, 43–7; Seibt, 'Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf Byzantinischen Bleisiegeln, besonders im 11. Jahrhundert', 53–5; G. M. Lechner, 'Zur Ikonographie der "Gottesmutter des Zeichens"', in *Kunst der Ostkirche. Ikonen, Handschriften, Kultgeräte: Ausstellung des Landes Niederösterreich, Stift Herzogenburg*, ed. G. Egger (Wien: Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum, 1977), 77–90; Belting-Ihm, *Sub Matris Tutela*, 50–6; Kondakov, *Ikonografija Bogomateri*, 1915, II:105–25.

²⁷ Pitarakis, 'À propos de l'image de la Vierge orante', 45–6; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 75–9, 146; Belting-Ihm, *Sub Matris Tutela*, 50–6. Cf. Lead seal of Ioannes protoproedros from the second half of the eleventh century with the inscription 'Blachernitissa': G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. II (Basel: Benteli, 1984), 272, no. 522.

²⁸ Konstantina Karterouli, 'Nomisma Histamenon of Zoe and Theodora (1042)', Exhibit Item, The Byzantine Emperors on Coins. Online Exhibition of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, accessed 18 October 2019, <https://www.doaks.org/resources/online-exhibits/byzantine-emperors-on-coins/the-macedonians-and-their-immediate-successors-867-1081/nomisma-histamenon-of-zoe-and-theodora-1042>. For the authenticity of the coin: Seibt, 'Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln, besonders im 11. Jahrhundert', 53; Seibt, 'Der Bildtypus der Theotokos Nikopoios', 559–60.

²⁹ G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. I/1 (Basel: J. J. Augustin, 1972), 80, no. 89. Of course, there are numerous examples of this iconography (mostly lead seals) which appear with earlier dates in the different publications, nevertheless, these datings are highly uncertain. As Werner Seibt has pointed out: 'so far I could not find a single lead seal [with *Blachernitissa*] which could be dated with certainty to before 1050' Seibt, 'Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln', 53. The hypotheses about the early origin of the *Blachernitissa* iconography have been also challenged by the re-dating of the *Blachernitissa* icon of the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makary III Foundation in Nicosia which had been dated back to the eighth to ninth centuries in earlier publications. In the online catalogue of the museum, however, it has been published as a thirteenth-century work of art: 'Virgin Vlachernitissa', Online Catalogue of the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makary III Foundation, Nicosia, accessed 18 October 2019, <http://www.makariosfoundation.org.cy/bmen001.html>. For the early dating: S. Sophokleous, *Icons of Cyprus: 7th–20th Century* (Nicosia: Museum Publications, 1994), 76; Baltoyanni, 'The Mother of God in Portable Icons', 140.

³⁰ For the Usual miracle: E. A. Fisher, 'Discourse on the Miracle That Occurred in the Blachernai Church', in *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art: A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics*, ed. Ch. Barber and S. Papaioannou (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 300–339; Ch. Barber, 'Movement and Miracle in Michael Psellos's Account of the Blachernae Icon of the Theotokos', in



Fig. 8.1. Theotokos *Blachernitissa*, lead seal of Proedros John, second half of the eleventh century. BZS.1947.2.847.

Credit: Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

miraculous *Nikopoios* image, found in the Blachernai in 1031 (and probably inspiring the *Nikopoios* of the Ohrid Sophia Church), with the icon of the *Usual miracle*. A cornerstone of this theory is Michael Psellos's (ca. 1018–after 1078) account of the miracle describing how the veil covering the icon miraculously lifted up and simultaneously 'the form of the handmaiden of the Lord changed', having 'received her animate (ensouled, *ἐμψυχος*) visitation, thereby visibly signalling the invisible'.³¹ According to Psellos, the miracle has a symbolic meaning: 'the holy drapery raises itself for the Mother of God in an ineffable fashion so that she may embrace within herself the crowd that enters as if within some new inner

Envisioning Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Dynamic Patterns in Texts and Images, ed. Giselle de Nie and Thomas F. X. Noble (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 9–22; E. A. Fisher, 'Michael Psellos on the "Usual" Miracle at Blachernae, the Law, and Neoplatonism', in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. D. Sullivan, E. A. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 187–204; B. V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), 188–91; Ch. Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 80–3; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 154–61; Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii*, 358–67; Papaioannou, 'The "Usual Miracle" and an Unusual Image'.

³¹ *Discourse on the Miracle that Occurred in the Blachernai*. Michael Psellos, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, ed. E. A. Fisher (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994), 205–6. Translation by E. A. Fisher: Fisher, 'Discourse on the Miracle', 312.

sanctum and refuge that cannot be violated'.³² Thus, supposing that the icon represented the *Nikopoios* Theotokos, the transformation of the *Nikopoios* iconography into the new *Blachernitissa-Znamenie* has been interpreted as a reflection of the miracle in the iconography. It shows that 'the ensouled visitation' of the Theotokos was perceived by the Byzantines as the Virgin's hands are not holding the medallion any more, but embracing the people and praying for them: hence Christ in the aureole without physical support, hovering in front of the Virgin, makes the miracle visible. This abstract representation of the miracle, according to this theory, emerged from a new perception of images which was inspired by Neoplatonism and its concept of *empsychos graphe*.³³

Narrating and interpreting the icon's miracle, Psellos utilizes classical *ekphrasis*. The focal point of the Psellan *ekphrasis* is the Eucharist: he describes the miracle of



Fig. 8.2. Theotokos *Znamenie* (*Blachernitissa*), fresco in the apse. Transfiguration of the Saviour church on Nereditsa Hill, near Novgorod, 1199, destroyed in 1941.

³² *Discourse on the Miracle*. Psellus, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 206. Translation by Elizabeth A. Fisher: Fisher, 'Discourse on the Miracle', 312.

³³ Fisher, 'Michael Psellos on the "Usual" Miracle'; Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting*, 80–3; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 154–61.

the icon as an enactment of the liturgy, at the highest point of which, the veil of the sanctuary, the *katapetasma*, lifts in order to 'either manifest the truth concealed...or summon believers into the inner sanctums', that is to invite them to the Eucharist.³⁴ Relating the miracle as an enactment of the liturgy, however, Psellos does not make a comparison between icons and the Eucharist, as Bissera Pentcheva suggests, but rather, utilizing the rhetoric of eloquence, sheds light on the Eucharistic content of the miraculous Theotokos icon.³⁵ His *ekphrasis* recalls the *Adoration of Magi* miniature in the eighth-century Armenian *Echmiadzin Gospels* (Fig. 6.7), where the Theotokos *Nikopoios*, positioned in the centre of the 'inner sanctum' with open temple veils, reveals for the Magi and all the believers 'the truth concealed', the Incarnated and Risen Christ in the aureole, and invites them into the innermost sanctuary, 'the refuge that cannot be violated'.³⁶ The highlighted Eucharistic content of Psellos's account supports the hypothesis that the icon of the *Usual miracle* was indeed the *Nikopoios* image, miraculously discovered in the apse of the Blachernai in 1031.

Psellos's text, therefore, attests to a renewed Byzantine interest less in Neoplatonism in 'a period of intellectual freedom' than in the Eucharist in the age of Symeon the New Theologian and the azymes controversy.³⁷ All this invites us to look at the great innovation of the *Blachernitissa*, the hovering medallion, not merely through the lens of image theory but rather through those of eleventh-century Byzantine Eucharistic theology.³⁸ The supernatural movement of the aureole on the chest of the Theotokos suggests that Christ in the virginal womb is ensouled, animated, living, and divinized. Thus, the supernaturalism of the medallion vividly conveys the fundamental claim of contemporaneous Byzantine theology: the deification of men through the Eucharist which is the ensouled, life-giving, divinized body of Christ. This correlation is even more striking in the light of Leo of Ohrid's popular etymological argument regarding the Greek word *artos*, bread: 'For "bread" (*ἄρτος*) comes from "lift" (*αἶρω*) and "elevate" (*ἐπαίρω*) and

³⁴ *Discourse on the Miracle*. Psellos, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 205–6. Translation by Fisher, 'Michael Psellos "On Symeon the Metaphrast" and "On the Miracle at Blachernae"'. For the symbolism of the *katapetasma*: A. Lidov, 'The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon Revealing an Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy', *IKON* 7 (2014): 97–104.

³⁵ Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*, 190. In her 2010 interpretation of the Usual miracle, Pentcheva connects Byzantine image theology with the doctrine of *transubstantiation* which, however, as we have seen, was alien to Byzantine theological thought. Not to speak about the fact that Byzantine iconophile theology opposed to any identification of icons with the Eucharist: S. Gero, 'The Eucharistic Doctrine Of The Byzantine Iconoclasts And Its Sources', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68, no. 1 (1975): 12–15.

³⁶ See Chapter 6. ³⁷ Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 161.

³⁸ The uncertainties about the dating of the early images of *Blachernitissa* makes it impossible to establish a solid chronology of the development of the iconography. Nonetheless, so far I could not find a conclusive evidence challenging the tempting hypothesis that it was the azymes controversy that created this Marian image. A link between the leaven debate and the *Znamenie* iconography has already been suggested by other scholars: Evangelatou, 'Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life', 109–10; Pitarakis, 'À propos de l'image de la Vierge orante', 48–9.

“lead to things above”. And it gets its rising and warmth from leaven and salt.³⁹ The medallion of the *Blachernitissa-Znamenie* is not simply moving, but lifting, rising, and hovering, and does not fall down as the azyme, the ‘soulless stone and clay for bricks or pottery’ would definitely do.⁴⁰

It is this Eucharistic message that made the *Znamenie* image a powerful rival of the *Nikopoios* after the emergence of the azymes controversy and a widely disseminated central element of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine decoration of apse conches until as late as the eighteenth century. From this perspective it is particularly important that this development Byzantine Marian iconography was an organic part of the eleventh-century transformation of Byzantine apse decoration, discussed in the previous chapter. The earliest surviving examples of the *Blachernitissa* in apse frescoes are in the Shoan Church in Alania (Northern Caucasus, ca. mid-eleventh century (?), heavily damaged) and in Naxos (Ano Sangri, St Nicholas, the first layer of the fresco possibly goes back to the late eleventh century).⁴¹ Fully preserved murals with *Blachernitissa* are in the twelfth-century churches of Cyprus (Holy Apostles at Perachorio, Panagia at Triкомо, and St Mavra at Rizokarpaso, etc.) and Novgorod (the Saviour church in Nereditsa, 1199, Fig. 8.2).⁴² The Theotokos with hovering medallion figures in the centre of the axis leading the gaze of the viewer from the altar table to the *Pantokrator* of the dome. Christ in her womb is positioned above both the actual altar and the depicted one in the compositions of *Officiating bishops*, *Communion of the Apostles* and/or *The Heavenly Liturgy* (Fig. 7.17).

The Rite of the Elevation of the Panagia

The Eucharistic importance of the *Blachernitissa* is also suggested by the fact that it occurs in a specific liturgical vessel called *panagiaron*.⁴³ This vessel is connected

³⁹ Letter to a Roman bishop concerning azymes and the Sabbath. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid (1037–1056): Leben und Werk*, 182. Translation by M. H. Smith: Smith, *And Taking Bread*, 68.

⁴⁰ Letter to a Roman bishop. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid*, 182. Translation by M. H. Smith: Smith, *And Taking Bread*, 68.

⁴¹ D. V. Beletskii and A. Iu. Vinogradov, *Nizhnii Arkhyz i Senty: Drevneishie khramy Rossii* (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 215–16, 312–14; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 20, 163.

⁴² N. V. Pivovarova, *Freski tserkvi Spasa na Nereditse v Novgorode* (St. Petersburg: ARS, D. Bulanin, 2002), 38–9; Mantas, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του ιερού Βήματος*, 79–82; Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting*, 20; A. H. S. Megaw and E. J. W. Hawkins, ‘The Church of the Holy Apostles at Perachorio, Cyprus, and its Frescoes’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962): 297–300; Belting-Ihm, *Sub Matris Tutela*, 54.

⁴³ For the *panagiaria* (with further bibliography): B. Miljković, ‘Srpski panagijar iz Vatopeda’, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 49 (2012): 355–64; I. Drpić, ‘Notes on Byzantine Panagiaria’, *Zograf* 35 (2011): 51–61; I. A. Sterligova, ‘Pskovskoe serebrianoie bliudo XV v. dlia “Bogorodichnogo khlebtsa”’, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Khudozhestvennaia zhizn’ Pskova i iskusstvo pozdnevizantiiskoi epokhi*, ed. M. A. Orlova (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 383–90; Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, 162–77; A. V. Ryndina, ‘O liturgicheskoi simvolike



Fig. 8.3. Master Ivan: Panagiaron of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, 1435.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

with a rite known as the Elevation of the Panagia. As a rule, the Panagia is either a separate bread or *prosphora* devoted to the Virgin or it is cut from the *prosphora* of the oblation, from which the Amnos and the particles were previously excised during the Prothesis rite (Figs 5.10–5.11). The panagiaron is a container of this bread and it has two types: one is a plate-like object (Figs 8.3–8.5), and the other is a small, circular folding container, worn around the neck as an *encolpion*. In both cases, the *Blachernitissa* or other Marian image is represented on the inner side of the plate where the bread is placed by the priest.

Although Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition links this rite with the apostolic age, its earliest clear textual evidences are from the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ Typically, the

drevnerusskikh serebrianykh panagii', in *Vostochnokhristianskii khrām; liturgiia i iskusstvo*, ed. A. M. Lidov (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1994), 204–9; V. G. Putsko, 'Vizantiiskie panagiarii na Afone', in *Sbornik v chest na akad. Dimitiur Angelov*, ed. V. I. Velkov (Sofia: BAN, 1994), 247–56.

⁴⁴ For the rite: M. S. Zheltov, 'Panagiia', in *PE*, vol. LIV, 2019, 384–7; Miljković, 'Srpski panagijar iz Vatopeda', 356–7; J. J. Yiannias, 'The Elevation of the Panaghia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 225–36; M. Skaballanovich, *Tolkovyii tipikon: Ob'iasnitiel'noe izlozhenie tipikona s istoricheskim vvedeniem*, vol. III (Kyiv: Tip. Universiteta sv. Vladimira, 1915), 50–71. One of the earliest evidences of the rite is in the answers of the canonist Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid (1216/1217–ca. 1236) to the Serbian king, King Stefan Radoslav (1228–33), see (with further bibliography): Drpić, 'Notes on Byzantine Panagiaria'. John Yiannias ('The Elevation of the Panaghia', 228.) writes about the tenth-century evidence of the rite, but with an imprecise reference: Goar published the rite on the basis



Fig. 8.4. Master Ivan: Panagiariation of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, plates with the images of the Theotokos *Znamenie* (bottom), the *Old Testament Holy Trinity* (top inner), and the *Ascension* (top outer), 1435.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

rite is performed in monastic refectories after the Divine Liturgy, but it was common also among the laity. It repeats some key elements of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the communion outside the church (and sometimes within it): the elevation of the loaf was accompanied by the invocations to the Holy Trinity and the Mother of God which was followed by the distribution of bread. Consequently, the bread of the Theotokos could serve as substitute of the Eucharist in special cases (during journeys, in war or for those who were not allowed to take the communion). With its references to the Eucharistic sacrifice, the rite reinforced some fundamental elements of Byzantine Eucharistic doctrine and liturgical practice, by highlighting the significance of the leavened prosphora. Unsurprisingly, an early evidence of the rite is a fourteenth-century debate in which the monk Neophytos Prodromenos defends this rite against a Latin opponent.⁴⁵

Likewise, the containers of the Virgin's bread, the panagiaria with the image of the Theotokos also convey this Eucharistic message, through inscriptions and iconography alike. The now lost fourteenth-century panagiariation from the Panteleimon monastery, linked with Alexios III Komnenos, Emperor of Trebizond (1349–1390), had the following inscription: 'The maiden lends flesh to the Logos of God and Christ by means of bread distributes salvation.'⁴⁶ These words suggest that the idea behind both the rite of the Elevation and the iconography of the panagiariation is that the oblatory prosphora from which the Lamb is taken symbolizes the virginal body of the Theotokos. The *Blachernitissa-Znamenie*

of Cardinal Bessarion's Constantinople Euchologion (Grottaferrata, Biblioteca Statale del Monumento Nazionale, *Γ. β. 1*) which is currently dated not to the tenth century, but to the thirteenth (J. Goar, *Euchologion, Sive Rituale Graecorum* (Venetia: Typ. Bartholomaei Javarina, 1730), 680–1). See: S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, 'A Thirteenth Century Manuscript of the Constantinopolitan Euchology: Grottaferrata G.b. I, Alias of Cardinal Bessarion', *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 4 (2007): 175–96.

⁴⁵ Zheltov, 'Panagiia', 386.

⁴⁶ Drpić, 'Notes on Byzantine Panagiaria', 57 (with further bibliography in n. 43).

in the majority of panagiaria representing the hovering virginal womb reinforces this Eucharistic idea.

Other inscriptions connect the body or the womb of the Virgin with the Eucharist differently. An epigram, displayed in two panagiaria from the twelfth or thirteenth century, refers to the vision of Isaiah about the seraph with a burning coal (Isa 6:6–7) the Eucharistic interpretation of which appears in the priestly prayers of the Divine Liturgy and their medieval commentaries (see Chapter 2): ‘I behold you, O Virgin, like an awe-inspiring pair of tongs holding the burning coal-like bread that cleanses the dirt of the body and the soul.’⁴⁷ This text undoubtedly evokes the words of the Sophia commentary: ‘the fire is divinity, which consumes corruptible passions and illuminates the pure soul’. Another Marian hymn (*theotokion*) attributed to Andrew of Crete, which was occasionally chanted in the rite of Elevation, was inscribed on one of the earliest panagiaria from the Chilandar Monastery (with an uncertain dating between the tenth and thirteenth centuries): ‘Your womb became a holy table, having the heavenly bread, Christ, our God, from which all who eat will not die, as <he> the Nourisher of all has said.’⁴⁸ By emphasizing the connection between the Eucharist and the virginal body of the Theotokos, both the inscription and the rite amplify the idea of the deification of human nature through the Eucharist.

A series of steatite panagiaria from Mount Athos highlights the parallelism between the Divine Liturgy and the rite of Elevation visually. The fourteenth-century panagiarion of the Xeropotamou Monastery has an outer circle around the *Blachernitissa Theotokos*, representing a monumental composition of *The Heavenly Liturgy* (Fig. 8.5).⁴⁹ Over the Theotokos there is an altar with the *Melismos*, flanked by the double representation of the celebrating Christ Hierarchy. This composition is crowned by a *Hetoimasia*, venerated by angels in proskynesis. The Xeropotamou panagiarion repeats the vertical axis of the Orthodox apse mural decoration above the altar, the anti-Latin undertone of which has been discussed in Chapter 7. The centre of this axis is the medallion of the *Blachernitissa*, which is visually connected with the images of the *Melismos*, the altar, and the *Hetoimasia*, respectively, thus underlying its Eucharistic significance.

The Rus iconography of panagiaria reflects the rite of the Elevation in another way, by hinting to its two main invocations to the Holy Trinity and the Mother of

⁴⁷ Drpić, 58.

⁴⁸ Drpić, 58. The same *theotokion* appears also in a fifteenth-century panagiarion from the Vatopedi monastery, see Miljković, ‘Srpski Panagijar iz Vatopeda’.

⁴⁹ I. Kalavrezou, ‘Mother of God in Steatite’, in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 190–2; K. Loverdou-Tsigarida, ‘Panagiarion, Known as “The Pulcheria Paten”’, in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. A. A. Karakatsanis and B. Atsalos (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1997), 292–3; I. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 204–5.



Fig. 8.5. Panagiaron, Xeropotamou monastery, Mt Athos, fourteenth century.
 Credit: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

God, respectively. The Rus panagiaria have usually two representations: a Trinitarian image which is the so-called *Old Testament Trinity* representing the Holy Trinity as three angels (*Philoxenia of Abraham*) and a Marian image which is typically the *Znamenie* holding Christ without aureole.⁵⁰ This iconography of *panagiaria*, which appears from the fifteenth century onwards, underpins the Trinitarian perception of the Eucharistic sacrifice which was maintained by the Orthodox, but challenged by the Latins in the azymes controversy (see Chapter 7). One of the most precious and unique panagiaron with Gothic and Romanesque motifs has survived in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral: it was commissioned by

⁵⁰ Sterligova, 'Pskovskoe serebrianoie bliudo XV v. dlia "Bogorodichnogo khlebtsa"'. For this type of panagiaron outside Rus: E. C. Ryder, 'Panagiaron with the Virgin and Christ', in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557): Exhibition Catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, ed. H. C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 237–8.

Archbishop Evfimii in 1435 and executed by Master Ivan (Figs 8.3–8.4).⁵¹ The plates are held or rather elevated by four caryatid-like angels. The lower plate represents the *Znamenie*, the upper one the Trinity, while on the external side of the top one, as a reference to the mural church decorations, the scene of the *Ascension* highlights the Orthodox concept of theosis. Here, similarly to the Xeropotamou panagiaron, the focal point is Christ in the hovering medallion over the bust of the Virgin representing the virginal womb.

On most of the Sophia icons, the *Nikopoios* is represented, not the *Znamenie* which was, as we shall see, the greatest miraculous icon of Novgorod. Apparently, one can hypothesize *Nikopoios* images in Novgorod which have been lost. But it is also possible that the *Nikopoios* was intended to be a *Znamenie* in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, but the *Deesis* composition with its liturgical references required a modification of the *Znamenie* iconography. The late fifteenth-century drawing in the *Novgorod Apostol* representing the Theotokos with the hovering bust of Christ supports this latter option (Fig. 8.6). Here the iconography of the Theotokos is identical with the *Znamenie* images of the panagiaria in Rus.

Nevertheless, the ultimate proof of the link between the rite of Elevation and the Sophia icon is provided by those later versions of the Sophia iconography, which combine the Sophia iconography with the novel image of the rite of the *Elevation of the Panagia*.⁵² The first mural representation of this rite has survived from 1561 in the prothesis of the Annunciation Cathedral in Sviyazhsk, a fortress funded during the reign of Tsar Ivan IV (Fig. 8.7).⁵³ The scene is also represented in the *Illuminated Chronicle Compilation* of Ivan IV (*Litsevoi letopisnyi svod*) created in 1560s or 1570s.⁵⁴ The earliest two extant examples of the iconography that connects Sophia with the image of the *Elevation of the Panagia* are currently dated to the second half the sixteenth century or to the turn of the seventeenth century. One icon from the distant Solvychevodsk was commissioned by the famous Stroganov family and, therefore, can be linked with Moscow icon-painting

⁵¹ Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 129–30; Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, 171–7. For Evfimii, see Chapter 11.

⁵² See Cat. 26 and A. S. Preobrazhenskii, ‘Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhii i iavlenie Bogomateri apostolam v prelomlenii khlebov (Pokhvala Bogomateri)’, in *Ikony Vologdy kontsa XVI–XVII Veka*, ed. L. V. Nersesian (Vologda, Moscow: Drevnosti Severa, Severnyi palomnik, 2017), 254–65; E. M. Saenkova, ‘Novye siuzhety apostol’skoi ikonografii v russkom iskusstve XVI–XVII vekov’, *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 12 (2012): 191–2; E. V. Logvinov, ‘Obraz “Pokhvala Bogoroditse, s iavlaniem Bogoroditsy apostolam v prelomlenii khleba i Sofiei Premudrostiiu Bozhiiu”: Ikonograficheskii analiz izobrazheniia’, in *Ikony stroganovskikh votchin XVI–XVII vekov*, ed. M. S. Trubacheva (Moscow: Skanrus, 2003), 344–9; *Sofia* 2000, 330–1; *Sophia* 1999, 358–9; Sarab’ianov, ‘Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony’, 188–9; V. D. Sarab’ianov, ‘“Pokhvala Bogomateri” v russkoi ikonograficheskoi traditsii’, *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 1 (1996): 48–9; E. V. Logvinov, ed., *Iskusstvo stroganovskikh masterov: Restavratsiia. Issledovaniia. Problemy* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1991), 60–3.

⁵³ Saenkova, ‘Novye siuzhety apostol’skoi ikonografii’, 191–2; Sarab’ianov, ‘Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony’, 188–9.

⁵⁴ GIM, Muzeinoe (Museum) coll. 358, f. 930r. Cf. *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod XVI veka. Vsemirnaia istoriia*, vol. III (Moscow: Akteon, 2014), 265. See also Chapter 12.



Fig. 8.6. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, drawing in the Likhachev Apostol, Novgorod, end of the fifteenth century. Coll. 238 (F. P. Likhachev), op. 1, no. 274, f. 7v, SPbII RAN, St Petersburg.



Fig. 8.7. *The Elevation of the Panagia*, fresco in the prothesis, Sviyazhsk, Annunciation Cathedral, 1561.

Photo: Aleksandr Preobrazhensky.

(Fig. 8.8); whereas the provenance of the other slightly earlier icon, currently kept in the Museums of Moscow Kremlin (Cat. 26; Fig. 12.7), has not been clarified.⁵⁵

The textual basis of the *Elevation* iconography is a narrative about the origins of the rite, the Slavonic version of which is present not only in liturgical books but also in historical chronicles, and in the later period amongst the lections for the

⁵⁵ For the Solvychevodsk icon: Logvinov, ‘Obraz “Pokhvala Bogoroditse”’; Logvinov, *Iskusstvo Stroganovskikh masterov*, 60–3.



Fig. 8.8. *The Elevation of the Panagia and Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, detail of the icon Renewal of the Resurrection Church in Jerusalem and Praise to the Theotokos*, from the Annunciation Cathedral, Solvychegodsk, turn of the seventeenth century.
 Credit: Solvychegodsk Historical and Art Museum

feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God.⁵⁶ The text describes that whilst the rite was performed by the Apostles in Jerusalem after the Dormition of the Virgin, the Theotokos appeared miraculously in the air and gave her blessing to the Apostles.

Accordingly, the icon depicts Apostle Peter performing the Elevation of the Panagia, flanked by the Apostles. The figure of the blessing Theotokos hovers in the air, in the same axis as the panagiaron, as well as Sophia who is represented above her in her traditional form with fiery red face, imperial vestments, and wings. Thus, the vertical axis links the bread, the Mother of God and Sophia, respectively, thus identifying the three. The blessing bust of Christ over both the Theotokos and Sophia is another shared element: in both cases Christ appears as the Head of the Church which is symbolized simultaneously by the Mother of God and Sophia. Mary is flanked by Archangel Gabriel and Michael, whilst Sophia is venerated by John the Baptist on the left and John the Theologian on the right: since Mary appears in the centre of the image, she is replaced by the winged Evangelist beside Sophia. The presence of the two Johns reflects the Sophia commentary which mentions these two saints as examples of virginal life. This three-level composition is surrounded by prophets holding the symbols of their prophecies about the Virgin in their hands. Apostle Peter stands in front of a city wall: a reference to Jerusalem, but its red colour in the icon of the Kremlin Museum may recall the walls of the Moscow Kremlin. Chapter 12 will explore the meaning of the intertwined ecclesiological and Marian references of this iconography. What is important here is the Eucharistic hint of this late version of the Sophia icon to the rite of Elevation, by which it identifies Sophia with the bread/humanity of the Mother of God that was taken on and deified by Christ.

There is no doubt, therefore, that by integrating the *Nikopoios*, the image of the Theotokos holding her own womb, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon enshrined the Eucharistic, anti-azymite content of this Marian image. A similar anti-Latin Eucharistic-ecclesiological message was also conveyed by the three-figure *Deesis* composition followed by the Novgorod icon. If one compares the fundamental ecclesiological images of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the *Deesis* and the *Coronation of the Virgin*, respectively, the difference is telling. As discussed earlier, the *Coronation* is a modified *Deesis*, where the great innovation is the ‘taking out’ the Virgin from the choir of saints, out of the mass of mankind, ‘as something unleavened is taken from something leavened’, and her placement on a shared throne with Christ. In this context, the fact that the imperial crown, the symbol of

⁵⁶ *Commentarius de elevatione panis in honorem Deiparae*, BHG 1076t; cf. BHG 1049e. Ed.: PG 157, 332–33. For the Slavonic version see: Tvorogov, *Letopisets ellinskii i rimskii*, I:215–16; I. Ia. Porfir'ev, *Apokrificheskiia skazaniia o novozavetnykh litsakh i sobytiakh po rukopisiam Solovetskoj biblioteki* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1877), 92–6. See also the liturgical book called *Psaltir' sledovannaia* (Commentated Psalter): *Psaltir' sledovannaia*, vol. II (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 2016), 175; the text of the rite: 170–5.

the Virgin's uniqueness, was adopted by the Orthodox in the *Royal Deesis* as a part of their visual polemics against the Latins, gains even greater significance. In adopting the crown, however, Orthodox iconography abolished Mary's separate status amongst the saints and retained the traditional structure of the *Deesis*. As a next step, by developing the iconography of the *Royal Deesis*, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, in its turn, deprived the Theotokos of all her distinguishing royal symbols—which were given to Sophia—and represented the Mother of God in her traditional, 'humble' form. All these features of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon are in accordance with the main message of the *Nikopoios* Theotokos, visualizing the deification of men, perceived as an opportunity open to all Christians. It is this idea which is expressed in the Sophia commentary: 'for those who love virginity become like the Mother of God'. Consequently, it is erroneous to link the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and its commentary with the Western concept of *Immaculate Conception*, common in historiography since Vladimir Solovyov's 1898 lecture, as both the icon and the commentary express a theology which is fundamentally alien from this teaching.⁵⁷

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After the discussion of the azymes controversy in two chapters, it can be concluded that the *Novgorod Sophia*, a version of the *Deesis*, is a visual expression of an Orthodox identity which took shape during this debate that spanned centuries from the turn of the millennium to the early modern period. Both the *Deesis* as an ecclesiological-liturgical image and the *Nikopoios* Theotokos convey the teaching of theosis, championed by the Byzantines in their polemics against the unleavened Eucharistic bread. As in different theological formulations, so also in image, the exegesis of Proverbs 9 becomes a central tool for visualizing ideas. As a visual exegesis rendered to the central figure of Sophia, the Theotokos represents how Sophia-Christ has built her/his temple, the ensouled flesh in the virginal womb, offering his leavened bread and wine to his servants in the disc-aureole held by his mother. The seven columns of Wisdom's house, holding the throne of Sophia, symbolize the true faith and true worship inseparably intertwined, in common with the depicted celebrating church fathers in Orthodox sanctuaries since 1054.

⁵⁷ See Introduction.

Depicting Orthodoxy in Rus

In Novgorod the early twelfth-century fresco decoration of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral served as prototype. The surviving fragments show that the wall-paintings followed the main structure of the Kyiv mosaics which, as demonstrated earlier, bear witness to the making of a new Orthodox identity after the Schism of 1054. This chapter investigates how this emerging new Orthodox identity was visualized in the subsequent centuries prior to the appearance of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. The first part analyses church decoration and the second icon-painting, thus seeking to explore the direct iconographic roots of the Wisdom icon.

Visualized Theology of Theosis

Although only a very limited number of apse decorations have survived in Rus from the period before the fifteenth century as a consequence of the Mongol invasion of Rus, they demonstrate both the stability and the flexibility of the iconographical scheme developed in Slavonic Sophia churches. The majority of the few extant examples are from Pskov and Novgorod, but the medieval sanctuary frescoes in Novgorod were largely destroyed in the Second World War.¹ Especially important are those which show a complete decorative system: the Transfiguration church of Mirozh Monastery in Pskov (ca. 1140); the Transfiguration of the Saviour church on Nereditsa Hill, near Novgorod (1199, destroyed in 1941) and the previously discussed fourteenth-century churches in the vicinity of Novgorod, the Dormition church at Volotovo Field (1370–80, destroyed) and the Transfiguration church in Kovalyovo (1380, destroyed).² Regrettably, no sanctuary programmes have survived from the first half of the

¹ L. I. Lifshits, *Monumental'naia zhivopis' Novgoroda XIV–XV vekov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), 7.

² V. D. Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' serediny 1120-kh—nachala 1160-kh godov', in *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva v 22 tomakh*. Vol. II/1. Iskusstvo 20–60-kh godov XII veka, ed. A. I Komech (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2012), 224–61; Lifshits, Sarab'ianov, and Tsarevskaiia, *Monumental'naia Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda*; V. D. Sarab'ianov, 'Obraz sviashchenstva v rospisiakh Sofii Kyivskoi, Chast' II: Programma Sofiiskogo sobora i drevnerusskie pamiatniki XI–XII stoletii', *Iskusstvoznanie*, no. 3–4 (2012): 23–93; Sarab'ianov, 'programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii'; Lifshits, *Monumental'naia zhivopis' Novgoroda XIV–XV vekov*. Further partially surviving apse decorations in Novgorod include: the Annunciation church near Arkazh (Miachino) in Novgorod (1189; cf. T. Iu. Tsarevskaiia, *Freski tserkvi Blagoveshcheniia na Miachine* ('v Arkazhakh') (Novgorod: D. Bulanin,



Fig. 9.1. Fresco decoration with *Deesis* and church fathers in the apse, Transfiguration of the Saviour church on Nereditsa Hill, near Novgorod, 1199, destroyed in 1941.



Fig. 9.2. Frescoes in the apses, Transfiguration of the Saviour church on Nereditsa Hill, near Novgorod, 1199, destroyed in 1941. Water paint by L. M. Brailovskii (1904). Source: Suslov 1908, table 2.

fifteenth century, the time of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography, despite the fact that the historical sources testify to the creation of dozens of mural decorations in Novgorod, especially from the period of Archbishop Evfimii II (1429–1458) who was not only the commissioner of new wall paintings but also renovator of existing ones.³

The Hetoimasia

The *Novgorod Sophia* icon bears witness to a historicism in fifteenth-century Novgorod painting. It is strikingly connected with the twelfth-century traditions

1999), 23–38.) and the church of St Theodore Stratilates (1361; cf. T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, *Rospis' tserkvi Feodora Stratilata na Ruch'iu v Novgorode i ee mesto v iskusstve Vizantii i Rusi vtoroi poloviny XIV veka* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2007), 48–51, 71–90.)

³ See Chapter 11.



Fig. 9.3. Frescoes on the vaults, Transfiguration of the Saviour church on Nereditsa Hill, near Novgorod, 1199, destroyed in 1941. Water paint by L. M. Brailovskii (1904).
Source: Suslov 1910, table 3.

of apse decoration in Novgorod and related territories such as Pskov: the Wisdom icon and the sanctuary programmes of the Mirozh and Nereditsa churches show surprisingly numerous common iconographic elements. The apse of the Saviour church on Nereditsa hill (Figs 8.2, 9.1–9.3) has the multi-register decoration with the *Communion of the Apostles* and the echelon of frontal figures of the Church Fathers arranged in two rows, therefore their significance is emphasized.⁴ They flank an idiosyncratic *Deesis* where Christ is depicted as priest with tonsure, while the Mother of God supplicates on his left and John the Baptist on his right. In the conch, the standing figure of the Theotokos appears with the hovering medallion of Emmanuel on her chest. She is below the *Hetoimasia*, on the same axis as the Christ-Priest of the *Deesis* in the lower register, the bust of the Ancient of the Days in medallion on the Eastern arch and the Christ of the *Ascension* in the dome respectively. Thus, the altar of the Nereditsa church shows the basic iconographic elements of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon (*Deesis*, *Hetoimasia*, *Znamenie*, and the bust of Christ) in a liturgical context.

The wall-painting of the Transfiguration church of the Mirozh Monastery, commissioned by the Novgorod Archbishop Nifont (1130–1156) has even closer affinity with the Wisdom icon (Figs 9.4–9.5).⁵ The frescoes of the Mirozh Monastery are profoundly Hesychast centuries before the Hesychast controversy discussing the nature of uncreated light that had been manifested to the disciples at the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor (Matt 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36).⁶ They are also explicitly Eucharistic a decade before the outbreak of the Byzantine Eucharistic controversy about the Trinity's participation in Christ's sacrifice.⁷ They challenge the attempts of art historians to link the principal transformations of church decoration and iconographic trends in Rus primarily with internal Byzantine debates which, as mentioned earlier, are without echoes in theological literature of Rus.⁸ The representation of the *Communion of the Apostles* and the double echelon of the Church Fathers follow the well-known structure. A distinctive element of the apse at Pskov is the monumental *Deesis* in the conch which is crowned by a *Hetoimasia*. A further particularity is the *Transfiguration* on the bema vault which through the circular white mandorla of the transfigured Christ is visually connected with the likewise circular white mandorla of the Christ of the *Ascension* in the dome.

⁴ For the apse and dome decoration of the Saviour church in Nereditsa: Pivovarova, *Freski tserkvi Spasa na Nereditse*, 34–50; Sarab'ianov, 'Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii', 283–7.

⁵ Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' serediny 1120-kh—nachala 1160-kh godov', 224–61; Sarab'ianov, 'Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii', 274–83.

⁶ For the problem of the supposed relationship between Byzantine Hesychast controversy and the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography see the Introduction.

⁷ For a brief introduction to the twelfth-century Byzantine Eucharistic debates: Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 187–8. See also Chapter 7.

⁸ Sarab'ianov, 'Zhivopis' serediny 1120-kh—nachala 1160-kh godov', 14, 226–9; Sarab'ianov, 'Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii', 268–70, 282.

The most significant feature of Orthodox apse decoration after 1054 is the emphasized vertical axis above the actual altar which conveys the idea of deification through the Eucharist. This vertical axis gains a special emphasis at the Mirozh Monastery, through seven different representations of Christ, as well as various symbolical visualizations of the altar and through the double representation of the divine light as a large circular mandorla in the *Transfiguration* and *Ascension* scenes respectively. The totality of this vertical pictorial system, however, is visible only from the area under the dome where the communion of the believers took place (Fig. 9.4).



Fig. 9.4. Fresco decoration in the apse and the dome, Transfiguration church, Mirozh Monastery, Pskov, ca. 1140.

Photo: Aleksandr Preobrazhensky



Fig. 9.5. Apse decoration, Transfiguration church, Mirozh Monastery, Pskov, ca. 1140. Photo: Aleksandr Preobrazhensky.

The central image of this programme is the *Deesis* in the conch. The presence of the *Deesis* here is archaic and unique in the new multi-register apse decoration system, where the conch is usually occupied by the Mother of God.⁹ The *Deesis* in the conch of the Mirozh, however, is not a mere archaism but a key to the unique Christological-Eucharistic programme of the apse. The enlarged figure of Christ is seated on a throne draped in white as a hint at the shroud of Christ. This reference to Christ's sacrifice creates a visual link with the altar, represented below in the *Communion of the Apostles*, and with the *Hetoimasia* above the *Deesis*, covered likewise with a veil. This interconnected iconographic programme makes the Eucharistic significance of the *Deesis*, discussed earlier, unequivocal: Christ appears here as the Bridegroom at the wedding banquet of the Church, 'the marriage supper of the Lamb' (Rev 19:9), which is the Divine Liturgy. The enthroned Christ in this liturgical setting is simultaneously the image of the 'shepherd' who feeds the Church and that of the 'sheep' who is sacrificed in the Eucharist.¹⁰

The disposition of the *Hetoimasia*, the prepared backless draped throne above the *Deesis* at Mirozh recalls the composition of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. That

⁹ See Chapter 5. The most important parallel of the Mirozh *Deesis* is the apse decoration of the Holy Apostles church in the Patriarchate of Peć from ca. 1260; V. J. Đurić, S. M. Ćirković, and V. R. Korać, *Pećka Patrijaršija* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska revija, 1990), Figs 9–10.

¹⁰ See Chapter 5.

these two visual elements belong together in the *Novgorod Sophia* icons is indicated by either the identical or the similar form of the throne of Sophia and the *Hetoimasia* over the segment of heaven, flanked by angels. This connection reveals the sophiological aspect of the Throne of God: this is the throne of Wisdom, which simultaneously symbolizes the house of Wisdom held by seven pillars (Prov 9:1), and the table of Sophia which she prepared for her wine and bread (Prov 9:2–6), as well as refers to Solomon's temple (3 Kgdms 5–7) and the throne of Solomon (3 Kgdms 10:18–20), respectively.¹¹

The throne of Christ-Wisdom at Mirozh Monastery and the throne of the winged Sophia in the *Novgorod Sophia* icons constitute part of a *Deesis* composition that is linked with a *Hetoimasia* image in both cases. In scholarly literature, the *Hetoimasia* is given two seemingly contradictory interpretations: either as an eschatological image which refers to Christ's Second Coming (cf. Ps 9:8–9; 88:15; 103:19) or as a primarily liturgical representation symbolizing the presence of the Holy Trinity in the Eucharist.¹² Art historians have usually emphasized the eschatological aspect of the *Hetoimasia* which appeared as a central element in *Last Judgement* compositions from the eleventh century onwards.¹³ Several recent studies have revealed the liturgical significance of this iconography on the basis of the representation of the *Hetoimasia* in the scene of the *Officiating Church Fathers*.¹⁴ A similar Eucharistic connotation of the *Hetoimasia* is apparent on the fourteenth-century paten of the Xeropotamou monastery (Fig. 8.5), described in the previous chapter, which associates the prepared throne flanked by angels in proskynesis with the altar of the *Heavenly Liturgy* and the hovering medallion of the *Blachernitissa Theotokos*, respectively.¹⁵

The two interpretations of the *Hetoimasia* are not contradictory, but complementary.¹⁶ It is important to underline, however, that the intertwined eschatological and Eucharistic meaning of the *Hetoimasia* is of biblical origin: Revelation describes the 'marriage supper of the Lamb' (Rev 19:9) as the coming of 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' (Rev 19:16), 'clothed with a robe dipped in blood' (Rev 19:13) to judge the world. Thus, the Prepared Throne in Revelation is

¹¹ This sophiological symbolism is frequently reflected in the iconography of the throne of the Theotokos, both in the East and the West. For the Western images: I. H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972); G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. I (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), 23–5.

¹² Weyl Carr, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered*, 52–5.

¹³ For the *Hetoimasia* (with further bibliography): G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini: Eschatological Thought in 4th-Century Apses and Catecheses* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1989), 102–8; Th. Bogyay, 'Thron (Hetoimasia)', in *LCI*, vol. IV, 1972, 305–13; Th. Bogyay, 'Hetoimasia', in *RBK*, vol. II, 1971, 1189–202.

¹⁴ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 38–9; Townsley, 'Eucharistic Doctrine and the Liturgy in Late Byzantine Painting'; Babić, 'Les Discussions Christologiques'.

¹⁵ Kalavrezou, 'Mother of God in Steatite', 190–2; Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*, 131–2, 205–8.

¹⁶ Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 264–5.



Fig. 9.6. Fresco decoration in the dome, Trikomo, Cyprus, thirteenth century.

Photo: Vera Zavaritskaya.

simultaneously a 'great white throne' (Rev 20:11) of the judging God and the 'throne of the Lamb' (Rev 22:1) in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

As a result, the bridal image of the *Deesis* was variously combined with the *Hetoimasia* and not only in the *Last Judgement* compositions. This combination became a distinguishing feature of cupola decorations in Cyprus in the early twelfth century, as we have already seen regarding the Treskavec dome in discussing the iconography of the *Royal Deesis* (Fig. 5.4). In Trikomo, Lagoudera (1192, Fig. 9.6), and in a series of thirteenth-century Cypriot churches (e.g. Lysi and Megara, St Hierotheos), the Prepared Throne on the drum of the dome is flanked by the Theotokos and John the Baptist and by the adoring angels who encircle the bust of King of Kings.¹⁷ The liturgical references in Cyprus are more explicit than in Rus: the Passion instruments, the Gospel Book, and the Dove of the Holy Spirit over the Cypriot *Hetoimasia* representations, just as in Veljusa and

¹⁷ Papamastorakis, *Ο διάκοσμος του τρούλου*, 80–97; Weyl Carr, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered*, 50, 53; Papageorghiou, 'The Paintings in the Dome of the Church of the Panagia Chryseleousa, Strovolos', 151.

Nerezi, symbolize the Divine presence in Eucharistic sacrifice; the angels' procession around the heavenly throne, as Lydie Hadermann-Misguich has pointed out, is an early, embryonic form of the representation of the heavenly hosts celebrating the Celestial Liturgy.¹⁸ Although these adoring angels are missing from the Mirozh *Hetoimasia*, both the Rus and Cypriot *Deesis-Hetoimasia* combinations express the heavenly and eschatological dimensions of the actual Divine Liturgy celebrated in the altar.

Arguably a similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the *Novgorod Sophia* icons where usually six angels flank in proskynesis the *Hetoimasia* above the *Deesis*: some venerate the draped Throne with the instruments of Passion and a book, whereas the gestures of others over the rolling segment of heaven, pointing at the stars, indicate the end of the created world: 'the stars of heaven fell to the earth . . . , then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up' (Rev 6:14–15; cf. Isa 34:4).¹⁹ Although there are only six venerating angels on most of the *Novgorod Sophia* icons, they may symbolize the seven archangels (Tob 12:15) or Spirits (Rev 1:4) who are before the throne of God.²⁰

The Iconography of Light

By locating the monumental figure of Christ of the *Deesis* in the centre of this liturgical visual programme, the frescoes of the Transfiguration church at the Mirozh Monastery offer a pictorial-theological commentary on the Eucharist: above the double representation of Christ distributing his own blood (wine) and body (leavened bread), the enthroned Bridegroom of the *Deesis* appears as the Lamb sacrificed on the actual altar below.

The representation of the *Transfiguration* on the bema vault at the Mirozh Monastery (Fig. 9.7) gives a particular and unusual emphasis on the Eucharistic aspect of the doctrine of theosis. In this mural, the narrative of the Gospels (Matt 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36) is secondary: three marginalized separate scenes show Christ as he goes on the mountain and turns back with his three disciples who fall to the ground in fear when witnessing his unbearable glory. Instead, the creators of the Pskov mural programme aimed at visualizing how the human body of Christ was transfigured: 'His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light' (Matt 17:2), and subsequently 'a bright cloud

¹⁸ L. Hadermann-Misguich, 'Le Temps des Anges', in *Le temps des Anges: recueil d'études sur la peinture byzantine du XIIe siècle, ses antécédents, son rayonnement* (Brussels: Le Livre Timperman, 2005), 17–39.

¹⁹ J.-P. Himka, *Last Judgment Iconography in the Carpathians* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 34. There is a group of *Novgorod Sophia* icons where two angels roll up the two ends of the segment of heaven (Cat. 4, 5, 13, 17, 25, 29, 30).

²⁰ In the Russian 'Wisdom has built her house' images (Figs 4.2–4.4), seven angels of the seven churches of the Revelations are represented (Rev 1–3; see Chapter 4).



Fig. 9.7. *Transfiguration* and *Deesis*, fresco in the apse and bema vault, Transfiguration church, Mirozh Monastery, Pskov, ca. 1140.

Photo: Aleksandr Preobrazhensky.

overshadowed Him' (17:5). One of the means to represent this transfiguration of the human body by the divinity is the circular mandorla around the white-robed Christ, placed in the central axis of the sanctuary: an iridescent aureole which consists of concentric circles, from blue to white, and divided by seven rays. The same aureole appears again in the *Ascension* scene of the dome, although here Christ is seated on a rainbow, and instead of rays, stars embellish the medallion (Fig. 9.4).

It is clear, therefore, that the aureole plays a key role in this iconographic programme: its function is to create a conceptual link between the different Christological representations in the sanctuary, thus conveying the Orthodox teaching about the Eucharist. This is again an element in common between the Pskov frescoes and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, comprising three circular aureoles (around Sophia and the two images of Christ, respectively) which refer to each other. Furthermore, the aureoles of the *Transfiguration* and the *Ascension* scenes in Pskov connect the Eucharistic programme of the altar area with the episodes of Christ's life, represented on the side walls. This visual concept of representation of light directly reflects the Eucharistic theology of the period—a spiritual heritage of Symeon the New Theologian who regarded Eucharistic communion as a substantial participation in Divinity which is put on by the believers 'as a garment of light'.²¹ This idea is also present in the Slavonic liturgical commentary quoted by the Sophia commentary, which describes the communion as 'participation in the great light' in the Heavenly Jerusalem.²²

²¹ Perczel, 'The Bread, the Wine and the Immaterial Body', 139, 152–3. See also: Perczel, 'Saint Simeon the New Theologian and the Theology of the Divine Substance'.

²² Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia*, 388. See Chapter 2.



Fig. 9.8. Mosaic decoration in the apse and the triumphal arch, Monastery of St Catherine, Mount Sinai, 548–65.

Credit: After Linn, Ravit; Tepper, Yotam; Bar-Oz, Guy (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185149.g001>

In visualizing the divine light, painters relied primarily on the biblical narratives of the Transfiguration and their patristic interpretations which provide information regarding the nature and visual appearance of this light.²³ Accordingly, the iconographic roots of the Pskov aureole can be traced back to the sixth-century *Transfiguration* apse mosaic in Sinai which have elements common with the iconography of light in Rus: both the bluish iridescent mandorla and the seven (or eight?) rays of light (Fig. 9.8).²⁴ Amongst the Slavic homilies on the Transfiguration, the sermon of Andrew of Crete is especially helpful in interpreting the iconography of light applied both at the Mirozh Monastery and in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.²⁵

Andrew separately analyses the three appearances of the divinity in the Transfiguration: the white clothing, the shining face, and the cloud. Discussing

²³ A. Böck, 'Mandorla', in *RBK*, vol. VI, 1997, 2–17; S. Dufrenne, 'La manifestation Divine dans l'iconographie Byzantine de la Transfiguration', in *Nicée II, 787–1987: douze siècles d'images religieuses*, ed. François Boespflug and Nicolas Lossky (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 185–205.

²⁴ J. Miziołek, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53 (1990): 42–60. See also: A. M. Lidov, 'Iudeo-khristianskaia ikona sveta: Ot siiaiushego oblaka k vrashchaishechemusia khramu', in *Obraz i simbol v iudeiskoi, khristianskoi i musul'manskoi traditsii*, ed. A. B. Kovel'man and U. Gershovich (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), 127–52; J. Elsner, 'The Viewer and the Vision: The Case of the Sinai Apse', *Art History* 17, no. 1 (1994): 81–102.

²⁵ Ch. Hannick, *Maximos Holobolos in der kirchenslavischen homiletischen Literatur* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 243–4. Greek original: *In transfigurationem Domini*, CPG 8176; PG 97, 932–57. For Andrew of Crete, see Chapter 2.

the first one, he expounds the foundations of Christian clothing metaphor, frequently applied in his own works and also utilized by the *Sophia* commentary, among others by quoting his homily on Lazarus. For him, the white garment is the sign of the perfect cleansing of the human nature from sin by the Holy Spirit. The garments simultaneously reveal and hide the divinity. The face of Christ, however, which 'shone like the sun', made the incomprehensible beauty of the Logos visible in a way which was unbearable for the disciples. Finally, the bright cloud represents the appearance of the Holy Spirit, but since the Spirit is inseparable from the Trinity, the bright cloud also signifies the presence of the Holy Trinity. Here Andrew draws a parallel between the theophany of Christ's Baptism and that of the Transfiguration. With a reference to the verse 1 Corinthians 10:1–4, Andrew links the cloud of Transfiguration with the water of the Red Sea (crossed by Moses and Israel) and thus with the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

The visual link between the Eucharistic images of Christ and the bright cloud around the transfigured Lord in the apse decoration of the Mirozh Monastery identifies the Eucharist with the divine light. This fresco programme at a monastic church, however, is not a mere expression of some abstract theological ideas but rather an invitation to a moral cleansing through the participation in the sacraments of the Church. This is also the main message of Andrew of Crete's homily:

Become, in every fibre of your being, the pure devotee of better heavenly things, and receive in the Spirit the pure and blessed gift of sharing the life of the Word, whose outcome is divinization and the enjoyment of ineffable blessings. As a result, true virtue, shaped and stamped by all the virtues, will be revealed in you . . . Through wisdom, Wisdom itself will become known, in which 'all things have come into being' (Col 1:17).²⁶

The analysis of the Mirozh frescoes unravels the light symbolism of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. Although each *Sophia* icon displays an individual iconography of the aureole, three common elements of the early icons can be distinguished: their circular form; the three concentric circles of which they are consisted; and the rays, the form and the number of which vary. The aureole signifies the joining of the eternal light through the sacraments of the Church. It is the bright cloud which, according to Andrew of Crete, is simultaneously the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity. The three concentric circles in the mandorla are frequent in Byzantine iconography and refer to the Trinity.²⁷ Most spheres of light have

²⁶ *On the Transfiguration of Christ*, translation by B. E. Daley: B. E. Daley, trans., *Light on the Mountain: Greek Patristic and Byzantine Homilies on the Transfiguration of the Lord* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 199–200.

²⁷ For the symbolic interpretation of these three concentric circles by John of Gaza in the sixth century, see: H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1987), 12.

eight rays in Byzantine art: a solar symbolism that is also present in the narrative of the Transfiguration.²⁸ In the *Transfiguration* murals of the Mirozh Monastery, however, there are only seven rays, and the same is the case with the *Sophia* icon, today kept in the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral (Cat. 1; Fig. 0.4). Departing from Andrew of Crete's explanation that the bright cloud is the Holy Spirit, the seven rays may refer to the seven Spirits of Revelation (Rev 1:4) associated with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:1–3) which, at the same time were also identified with the seven pillars of Sophia's house in the *Sophia* commentary. This sophiological interpretation of Sophia's sphere is underpinned by Andrew of Crete who defines divinization as 'through wisdom, Wisdom itself will become known'. Undoubtedly, this is the briefest encapsulation of the meaning of the *Sophia* icon and its commentary, the foundation of which is the Orthodox doctrine of theosis.

Anti-Latin Ecclesiology of Novgorod Icons

The concept of Orthodoxy depicted in Rus sanctuary was also visualized in icons which constituted an equally significant part of visual decoration of Orthodox churches. Unlike the mural decoration of the Novgorod *Sophia* Cathedral from which almost nothing has survived, luckily, we have some evidence of the medieval icons at the Novgorod *Sophia* Cathedral (Fig. 9.9). An important text is the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* describing the renovation of the iconostasis at the time of Archbishop Makarii (1526–42) in 1528 which mentions its three venerated icons on the local tier: the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, identical with the today local icon of the cathedral (Cat. 3, Fig. 0.1; see also Chapter 11) and two 'Constantinopolitan', i.e. ancient icons embellished with gold and silver covers (*oklads*) representing the Saviour and the Apostles Peter and Paul respectively.²⁹ The text indicates that these two latter icons were a pair and possibly the works of Byzantine painters. There are two extant icons from the Novgorod *Sophia* Cathedral which can be identified with these two images, primarily based on their similar and unusually large sizes (236×147 cm and 236×146 cm). The first one is the so-called *Saviour in a Golden Robe* (or *Saviour of Emperor Manuel*, Fig. 9.10), which was transported to the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral in 1561.³⁰ The second is the icon of the Apostles Peter and Paul, now in the Novgorod

²⁸ Miziolek, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light'. There is no agreement about the number of the rays (seven or eight) in the Sinai *Transfiguration* mosaics.

²⁹ PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 545–46.

³⁰ T. V. Tolstaia, ed., *Ikony Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlia: XI-nachalo XV veka* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2007), 192–7; E. S. Smirnova, "'Spas Zlataia riza": K ikonograficheskoj rekonstruktsii chtimogo obraza XI veka', in *Chudotvornaia Ikona v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Martis, 1996), 159–99.



Fig. 9.9. The interior of the St Sophia Cathedral with its main iconostasis, Novgorod.
Photo: Anna Zakharova.

Museum (Figs 9.12–9.13).³¹ Although the Saviour icon was completely repainted at the end of the seventeenth century (preserving the early iconography), and the icon of the apostles is also heavily damaged, their mid-eleventh-century dating has been generally accepted. Engelina Smirnova has argued that the two large icons were designed specifically for the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral; they also had nearly coeval oklads made possibly in the eleventh century.³² This implies that the visual programmes of these two icons are complete only with those of their covers.



Fig. 9.10. *Saviour in a Golden Robe*, icon from the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, fifteenth-seventeenth centuries (painting), eleventh century (iconography, panel?). Dormition Cathedral, Moscow, Kremlin.

³¹ E. S. Smirnova, 'Apostoly Petr i Pavel', in *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, ed. L. V. Nersesian (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 74–82; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 181–6.

³² E. S. Smirnova, 'O pervonachal'noi kompozitsii i ikonograficheskoi programme serebriannogo oklada XI v. ikony 'Apostoly Petr i Pavel' iz Sofijskogo sobora v Novgorode', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Vizantiia, Rus', Zapadnaia Evropa—iskusstvo i kul'tura*, ed. L. I. Lifshits (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2002), 79–99; I. A. Sterligova, 'O vremeni sozdaniia chekannogo oklada ikony "Petr i Pavel" iz Novgorodskogo Sofijskogo sobora', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Rus' i strany vizantiiskogo mira. XII vek*, ed. O. E. Etingof (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2002), 477–93.

Although both the eleventh-century painting of the Saviour icon and its cover have now lost, its numerous replicas confirm the iconography of the original icon. In addition, its seventeenth-century copy, which is today on the main iconostasis of the St Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, has a painted decoration on its margins which may reflect the iconography of the lost ancient cover (Fig. 9.11).³³ The copy



Fig. 9.11. Saviour enthroned, the copy of the icon *Saviour in a Golden Robe*, icon on the main iconostasis of the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, seventeenth century.

³³ Smirnova based this hypothesis on the registers of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral from 1627, 1638 and 1701 which describe the iconography of the oklad, more or less corresponding to the icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral. E. S. Smirnova, 'Ikony XI v. iz Sofijskogo sobora v Novgorode i problema altarnoi pregrady', in *Ikonnostas: Proiskhozhdenie-razvitie-simvolika*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000), 278–9; Smirnova, 'Spas Zlataia riza', 163–4. See also: Tsarevskaia, *Velikii Novgorod. Uspenskii (Bol'shoi) Ikonnostas Sofijskogo Sobora*, 5; A. N. Trifonova and Iu. B. Komarova, 'Ikonnostas Nikolo-Dvorishchenskogo sobora v Novgorode', *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 9 (2005): 341–5; Smirnova, 'Spas Zlataia riza'.

of the cover was possibly made at the time of the transport of the original icon to the Moscow Kremlin in the sixteenth century. The iconography of the *Saviour in a Golden robe* represents Christ frontally in gold vestments seated on a large straight-backed gold throne which occupies the full width of the icon. Christ holds in his left the Gospel, pointing with the two fingers of his right at the Greek text of John 8:12: 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.' The monumental throne and the large figure of Christ convey the same Eucharistic idea as at the Mirozh Monastery: the throne is an intertwined reference to the altar and the throne of judgment, whereas Christ in gold is the image of the redeemed, deified humanity. Light symbolism is transferred primarily by gold, as confirmed also by the popular title of the icon. Gold, however, was not only the dominant colour of the image but also that of the cover of the original icon, the beauty and richness of which was praised by the sixteenth-century chronicler. The aureole does not play a significant role in this icon; instead, the text of the Gospel highlights the essence of Christian light theology.

The great number of later replicas of this icon, together with the textual sources, indicate the importance of the *Saviour in a Golden robe* in Novgorod, which, according to Nina Kvilidze, originally might have served as the dedicatory icon of the Cathedral. Since the Cathedral was consecrated on 14 September, a Christological feast, the Exaltation of Cross was the main feast of the church before the end of the fifteenth century, therefore it is likely that its dedicatory icon represented Christ, the Wisdom of God.³⁴ This hypothesis may be supported by the sophiological allusions of *Saviour in a Golden robe* image which are the most explicit in the iconography of the throne: this throne scarcely resembles an actual seat, but rather a fortress or a wall. At the Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv (Fig. 7.3) there is an inscription on the face of the Eastern arch, a passage from the Psalm 45: 'God is in her midst; she shall not be shaken; God shall help her early in the morning' (45:6). This text compares the Theotokos with the indestructible city of Jerusalem, who, as a symbol of the Church, in protective orans position is portrayed in the apse conch: Christ-Wisdom has built her so that she became the refuge for those who seeking for shelter (cf. Ps 45:1).³⁵ Likewise, the throne, depicted as a massive architectonic setting in the Saviour icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, is a symbolic image of the Church, God's City, the house of Wisdom who is seated in its 'midst'. The same passage in Psalm 45

³⁴ N. V. Kvilidze, 'Novgorodskaia ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei', in *Pravoslavnaia ikona: Kanon i stil'. K bogoslovskomu rassmotreniiu obraza*, ed. A. N. Strizhev (Moscow: Palomnik, 1998), 389–90. For the consecration of the Sophia Cathedral: PSRL, vol. VI/I 2000, 180–1.

³⁵ Aken'tev, 'Mozaiki Kievskoi Sv. Sofii i "Slovo" Mitropolita Ilariona'; S. S. Averintsev, 'K uiasneniiu smysla nadpisi nad konkhoi tsentral'noi apsidi Sofii Kievskoi', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: khudozhestvennaia kul'tura domogol'skoi Rusi*, ed. V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 25–49.



Fig. 9.12. Apostles Peter and Paul, icon from the main iconostasis of the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, second half of the eleventh century.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

is visualized in the *Kyiv Psalter*, by showing Sophia as an angel who supports the walls of a church (Fig. 4.1).³⁶

The icon of the Apostles Peter and Paul, the first extant example in Byzantine art, visualizes again an ecclesiological subject (Fig. 9.12). The full-length figures of the princes of the apostles are crowned by the blessing bust of Christ, similarly to the *Novgorod Sophia* icon where Christ is depicted above the head of the winged Wisdom. In both cases, the blessing Lord is an ecclesiological formula: the image of Christ as the head of the Church, as well as a reference to the blessing Pantokrator images of the dome decorations. The two apostles constitute the body of Christ (as does Sophia in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon), who are the two leaders of the twelve apostles, the representatives of the local churches, funded by them. Just as in the *Communion of the Apostles* fresco at the Ohrid Sophia Cathedral (Fig. 7.9), so also here a characteristic feature of the iconography is

³⁶ G. I. Vzdornov, ed., *Kievskaja psaltir' 1397 goda iz Gosudarstvennoi Publichnoi biblioteki imeni M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina v Leningrade [OLDP F 6]* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), fol. 63v. Kvilidze links this representation with the angelic vision of the son of the builder Ignatius in the legend of the construction of the Constantinople Hagia Sophia. Kvilidze, 'Ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei', 88.

the representation of the Apostle Paul on Christ's right side and Peter on his left. Considering the direct link between the iconographic programmes of the Slavonic Sophia churches, discussed above, this detail might have had an anti-Latin undertone, in spite of the fact that some earlier examples exist with a similar arrangement, even in Rome itself.³⁷

These iconographies were contextualized by their covers which enrich the aforementioned visual programmes with further details, primarily by placing the figures of different saints on the margins of the icons. The upper segments of both covers represent (or represented) a *Deesis*. The oklad of the Peter and Paul icon (Fig. 9.13) was embellished with a five-figure *Deesis*, displaying Christ, Mary, John the Baptist, and the two archangels in full length, while the Saviour icon's cover might have depicted the demi-figures of the same saints and archangels, turning toward a *Hetoimasia* with a gesture of supplication (Fig. 9.11). The latter oklad apparently had the figures of the Apostles in the side margins, creating a further



Fig. 9.13. Apostles Peter and Paul, the cover of the icon from the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, second half of the eleventh century.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

³⁷ Smirnova, 'Apostoly Petr i Pavel', 78.

conceptual link with the icon of Peter and Paul, the cover of which depicts the paired figures of the holy warriors, physicians, and holy women respectively in the borders.

Thus, the earliest icons of the Novgorod Sophia cathedral presented a complex ecclesiological programme in which the basic elements of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon were already used. In the Saviour icon and its *oklad*, the enthroned Christ was associated with a *Deesis* composition, a *Hetoimasia*, and the figures of the twelve apostles respectively, a unique combination in icon painting, the liturgical meaning of which is evident in the light of the apse decoration of the Transfiguration church at the Mirozh Monastery. The innovative iconography of the paired iconic representations of Peter and Paul under the bust of Christ was combined with the image of *Deesis* on the cover.

All these motifs, the *Deesis*, the *Hetoimasia*, the paired saints, or the apostles recur frequently in the borders of later Novgorod icons. In an icon of the Tretyakov Gallery from the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the enthroned Christ is depicted under a *Hetoimasia* with the venerating Archangels Gabriel and Michael, as holding in his hand a Gospel, again with the quotation from John 8:12 (Fig. 9.14).³⁸ He is surrounded by warrior and bishop saints on the side and lower borders. Just as in the Cypriot domes (Fig. 9.6), in Treskavec (Fig. 5.4) and in the *Hetoimasia* murals of Veljusa (Fig. 7.16) and Nerezi (Fig. 7.17), so also in this Novgorod icon, the flanking angels are liturgical references: they associate the image of the Saviour with the Divine mysteries of the actual liturgy at the altar. Likewise, the paired saints on the margins, often arranged according to their ranks, similarly to the *Deesis*, allude to the Anaphora prayer which lists the different types of the saints. Accordingly, they recall the liturgical paten with the bread particles placed there by the priest commemorating them (Figs 5.10–5.11).³⁹

The Novgorod icons of St Nicholas with the *Hetoimasia*, archangels, and saints on the margins constitute a special group of art works.⁴⁰ A particularly elaborate example is an icon painted by Alexa Petrov for the Church of St Nicholas on the Lipna near Novgorod (1294, Fig. 9.15). On the side borders around the central figure of Nicholas, the paired figures of holy bishops and warriors are depicted. The upper border has a special type of *Deesis* with a central *Hetoimasia* flanked by archangels and the apostles. Irina Shalina proposed that the icon imitated the

³⁸ GTB, no. 22938. Ia. V. Bruk, ed., *Gosudarstvennaia Tre't'iakovskaia galereia: katalog sobraniia*, vol. I. *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo X-nachala XV veka* (Moscow: Krasnaia ploshchad', 1995), 74–6; E. S. Smirnova, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda: Seredina XIII—nachalo XV veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 161–5.

³⁹ I. A. Shalina, 'Ikona "Sviatoi Nikola" iz Sviato-Dukhova monastiria: liturgicheskii smysl i ekklesiologizatsiia obraza', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Rus', Vizantiia, Balkany. XIII vek*, ed. O. E. Etingof (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1997), 368.

⁴⁰ L. V. Nersesian, ed., *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 100–13; Shalina, 'Ikona "Sviatoi Nikola"'; Smirnova, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda: Seredina XIII—nachalo XV veka*, 170–4; E. S. Smirnova, 'Ikona Nikoly 1294 goda mastera Aleksey Petrova', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Zarubezhnye sviazi*, ed. O. I. Podobedova and V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 81–105.



Fig. 9.14. Saviour enthroned with saints, icon from Novgorod, thirteenth–fourteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

decorative system of Orthodox sanctuaries by its projection onto the two-dimensional surface of the icon panel: the figure of the saint in the centre of the icon corresponds to that in the apse conch; further, as we have also seen, each detail of the icon has a counterpart in church decoration. As a result, Shalina



Fig. 9.15. Alexa Petrov: St Nicholas, icon from the Church of St Nicholas on the Lipna, near Novgorod, 1294.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

argues, the painted space of the icon is compared with the constructed space of liturgical practice.⁴¹ While the first icons of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral already demonstrate the attempts of icon-painters to create the sacred space of Orthodox churches in icons by visualizing its distinguishing features, the thirteenth-century icons of St Nicholas make even more explicit liturgical references. This trend was arguably related to the making of a new Orthodox identity which simultaneously transformed the decoration of the Orthodox sanctuary.

⁴¹ Shalina, 'Ikona "Sviatoi Nikola"', 366–7.

Novgorod icons show particularly strikingly how this new identity gradually shaped not only iconography but also the visual language of icon-painting.

Since the Theotokos embodies the Church, the development of Marian iconography in Novgorod provides essential information about the main trends of ecclesiological iconography in Novgorod. A curious phenomenon, however, is that almost nothing is known about the medieval Marian icons of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral: even the aforementioned chronicle does not mention the Theotokos icons in describing the transformation of the Sophia Cathedral's iconostasis in 1528.⁴² A possible reason for this is that Novgorod's most venerated wonder-working icon, known from the sixteenth century as *Mother of God—the Sign* or *Znamenie*, was not placed in the Sophia Cathedral.⁴³ Before the end of the fourteenth century the icon was in the Transfiguration church on Elijah street; subsequently, a separate church was built for it on the same street. The *Znamenie* overshadowed all the other miraculous icons of Theotokos in Novgorod. This icon was very special as it was not merely a wonder-working icon, the most remarkable miracle of which occurred in 1170 when the icon saved the city from the troops of Suzdal: it was, at the same time, a reliquary representing a unique iconography.

The Novgorod *Znamenie* icon is a double-sided icon painted in the second quarter of the twelfth century (Figs 9.16–9.17). The verso depicts the demi-figure of the Theotokos *Orans* with the medallion of Christ on her chest. The recto shows a female and a male figure, most probably Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Christ, below the bust of Christ in blessing, as well as the Prepared Throne and saints in the margins. This is the earliest extant icon of this Marian iconography the previous examples of which are on coins and in mural paintings, most importantly in Cypriot apse decorations (see Chapter 8). Given the Christological and Eucharistic significance of this iconography and its link with the azymes controversy, its innovative presence in this venerated icon bears witness to the direct involvement of Novgorod in the polemics over azymes at a very early period. The depiction of the *Znamenie* Theotokos in the context of explicit Eucharistic scenes in the Nereditsa church (1199) underpins this conclusion. A corresponding idea appears in the *Annunciation* icon of the Ustiug Monastery in Novgorod (Fig. 9.18): the incarnated Christ is depicted in the womb of Mary, linked by a ray of light with the figure of the Ancient of the

⁴² Smirnova, 'Ikony XI v. iz Sofiiskogo sobora', 274–8. For the miraculous Theotokos icon of Jerusalem at the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral: T. V. Tolstaia, 'Ikona "Bogomater' Ierusalimskaia (Gefsimanskaia)" iz Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremliia i ee legenda', in *Vizantiiskii mir: Iskusstvo konstantinopolia i natsional'nye traditsii*, ed. M. A. Orlova (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2005), 647–62.

⁴³ E. S. Smirnova, 'Bogomater' Znamenie, Bogootsy Ioakim i Anna (?)', in *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, ed. L. V. Nersesian (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 89–99; Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii*, 309–11, 366–7; Smirnova, 'Novgorodskaiia Ikona "Bogomater' Znamenie"'. For the cult of this icon with further bibliography: M. B. Pliukhanova, 'Pokrov i Znamenie v Novgorode i v Pskove v XIV Veke', *Vestnik sektora drevnerusskogo iskusstva* 1 (2019): 16–29. For the iconography of *Znamenie*, see Chapter 8.



Fig. 9.16. Theotokos *Znamenie*, double-sided icon in the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, before 1169.



Fig. 9.17. St Joachim and Anna (?), verso of the double-sided Theotokos *Znamenie* icon in the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, before 1169.



Fig. 9.18. *Ustiug Annunciation*, icon from Novgorod, twelfth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Days in the segment of heaven.⁴⁴ The enthroned, blessing, and naked Emmanuel visualizes the ensouled Divine flesh in the human womb, a prime argument of the anti-azymes polemics.

As a Eucharistic image, the *Znamenie* icon simultaneously mediates fundamental ecclesiological concepts and references. The Theotokos *Orans*, just as at the Kyiv Sophia, is the image of the Church, the house of Wisdom: she has a protecting, praying gesture which summons the believers in the ‘refuge that cannot be violated’.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Theotokos *Orans*, with or without the medallion, was an allusion to emblematic Orthodox churches in Rus and Byzantium: the praying Mother of God in the apse conch of the Rus Sophia churches at Kyiv and Novgorod followed, among others, the iconography of the apse of Blachernai church in Constantinople where the Usual miracle occurred with the icon of the Mother of God every Friday.⁴⁶ The fact that both the *Znamenie* iconography and the Theokos *Orans* were called *Blachernitissa* in Byzantium suggests that both iconographies conveyed an association with the

⁴⁴ GTG, no. 25539. Bruk, *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereia: katalog*, I:47–50.

⁴⁵ Quotation from Psellos's description of the Usual miracle, see Chapter 8.

⁴⁶ For the Usual miracle, see Chapter 8.

Blachernai church. The *Znamenie* with its medallion also evoked the Friday miracle which was well known in Novgorod. The traveller Antonii of Novgorod described it in around 1200, and the *Novgorod First Chronicle* recorded the destruction of the cover of this icon by the Crusaders in 1204.⁴⁷

More importantly, the Blachernai enjoyed similar status to the Hagia Sophia church due to its most precious Marian relics: among others, the belt and the veil (omophorion) of the Theotokos were kept there. The cult of these relics was intimately intertwined with the Byzantine theology of garment which connected the clothing with the deified body and the concept of theosis. Apparently, the bright blue colour of the veil of the Theotokos in the *Znamenie* icon is a visualization of this idea. The iconographic references of the *Znamenie* icon to the Blachernai led Irina Shalina to hypothesize the presence of parts of the Blachernai relics (omophorion, belt, or the veil of the Usual miracle) in the small compartment of the *Znamenie* icon which is empty today.⁴⁸

Not only the recto of this Marian image hints to an actual Orthodox liturgical space, but also its verso. It depicts, as Smirnova convincingly argues, Joachim and Anna in the gesture of supplication below the ecclesiological formula of the bust of Christ and the *Hetoimasia* flanked by venerating archangels.⁴⁹ Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Mother of God, were very frequently represented in Byzantine and Rus apse decoration as the representatives of mankind. They symbolize the body taken by Christ who is represented here as the head of the Church. The liturgical symbolism of the composition is underlined by the presence of adoring angels. The Prepared Throne is a later painting but supposedly it was also part of the original iconography.⁵⁰ The structural and conceptual affinity with the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is striking again, especially considering that the Theotokos with medallion is also a shared element.

Over time, the references to the sacred space and liturgical practice of the Orthodox church became more and more explicit in Novgorod icons, so that they identified the Christian Church recognizably and exclusively with Byzantine Orthodoxy.⁵¹ This iconographic trend is very similar to that which has been discussed regarding Orthodox apse decorations and faithfully reflects the intensification of the polemics between the Latin and Greek Churches. In this aspect, the next turning point after 1054 was 1204 when Constantinople was sacked by the Crusaders. 1204 held a particular

⁴⁷ Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii*, 364.

⁴⁸ Shalina, 309–11, 366–7.

⁴⁹ Sterligova identifies the two figures with St Peter and St Anastasia who refer to the donors of the icon: I. A. Sterligova, 'Novgorodskie kratiry i ikona "Bogomater' Znamenie": Nekotorye problemy ikonografii', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Balkany. Rus'*, ed. O. E. Etingof and A. I. Komech (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1995), 311–23.

⁵⁰ Smirnova, 'Novgorodskaja ikona "Bogomater' Znamenie"', 98.

⁵¹ For the two-dimensional representations of architectural forms in Byzantium, Rus, and other parts of Byzantine cultural sphere: S. Ćurčić and E. Hadjityrphonos, eds., *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), esp. 3–38, 113–54.



Fig. 9.19. *Pokrov*, icon from the Zverin Monastery, Novgorod, ca. 1399.
 Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

significance for Novgorod, since after the Constantinople Hagia Sophia had been plundered by the Latins and the Kyiv Hagia Sophia had been captured by the Mongols in 1240, the significance of independent and free Novgorod and its Sophia Church was recognized as the centre of Orthodoxy. The Novgorod icons of St Nicholas already indicated the growing interest in ecclesiological subjects in the city's painting. In the fourteenth century, the same tendency continued, as demonstrated by the rapid dissemination of the emphatically anti-Latin late Byzantine iconography of the *Royal Deesis* in the distant Novgorod.⁵²

⁵² See Chapter 5.

At the end of the same century, another significant new ecclesiological iconography appeared in Novgorod. The icon of the Zverin Monastery from ca. 1399 represents the miraculous appearance of the Theotokos to Andrew the Fool and his disciple in the Blachernai church in the tenth century (Fig. 9.19). The feast of this vision, Pokrov—The Protection of the Mother of God, was celebrated on 1 October in Rus from the twelfth century onwards. The Slavonic version of the *Life of Andrew the Fool*, translated in the twelfth century, describes the large figure of the Mother of God appearing in the royal doors of the Blachernai church, accompanied by John the Baptist, John the Theologian (Evangelist) and holy bishops.⁵³ The Theotokos approached the *ambon* (an elevated platform) in the centre of the church where she had prayed for a long time, then after taking off her omophorion she spread it over the people in the church. According to the Novgorod version of the same legend, angels held the omophorion.⁵⁴ The earliest representations of the miracle of *Pokrov* go back to the thirteenth century; it appears in the fourteenth-century murals at Novgorod (Snetorgorskii Monastery/1313/; Church of Theodoros Stratilates/1380/), but the icon of the Zverin Monastery is the first extant *Pokrov* icon from Novgorod with the innovative and distinguishing iconographic features which Engelina Smirnova has classified as the Novgorod-type of *Pokrov*.

The *Pokrov* of the Zverin Monastery depicts the section of a three-nave and five-domed church which is divided into three registers. On the lowest register the royal gates are surrounded by eight saints: John the Baptist with three apostles are on the right of the gates and Andrew the Fool with his disciple and two warrior saints are on their left. In the central register the monumental figure of the Theotokos *Orans* is hovering. On her right, the three hierarchs, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen), are behind an altar; on her left, two angels stand behind a wall. Above her two angels hold her veil which is crowned by the figure of the blessing Christ.

In comparison with the earlier representations of the *Pokrov*, the great innovation of the Zverin icon is that the spatial context of the miracle is concretized. While previous representations locate the miracle against a neutral background, here the structure of the Blachernai is represented in a form which easily identifiable as an Orthodox cathedral, or probably, as the Sophia Cathedral at Novgorod. The Blachernai miracle is interpreted as a monumental vision of the Church; correspondingly, the icon represents the ideal image of the Orthodox Church. The protagonists of the vision are arranged not according to the narrative but in a way, which reflects contemporaneous church decoration, a visualized

⁵³ A. M. Moldovan, ed., 'Zhitie Andreia Iurodivogo', in *BLDR*, vol. II (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), 356–8. For the *Life of Andrew the Fool* with further bibliography: A. Iu. Nikiforova et al., 'Andrei Iurodivyi', in *PE*, vol. II, 2001, 391–3.

⁵⁴ Pliukhanova, 'Pokrov i Znamenie v Novgorode i v Pskove v XIV veke', 24; Gladysheva, 'Pokrov Bogomateri', 197.

interpretation of the Church: the Theotokos in the centre corresponds with the Theotokos *Orans* in the apse conch, the three hierarchs with the representation of the *Officiating Church Fathers*, the adoring angels with the celebrants of the heavenly liturgy and the blessing Christ with the *Pantokrator* in the dome.

The ambitious ecclesiological iconography of the Zverin *Pokrov* might be connected with Ioann, Archbishop of Novgorod (1388–1415) who pursued a similar ambitious ecclesiastical policy.⁵⁵ The victory over the Golden Horde in the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380 secured primacy of Moscow amongst the Rus principalities and gave its prince the right to use the title ‘Grand Prince’. In 1385, however, the Novgorodians rejected the ecclesiastical subordination to the Metropolitan of Rus whose see had been in Moscow since the early fourteenth century. This was a successful, albeit temporary attempt of the Novgorodians to free themselves from the growing political influence of Moscow, in spite of Constantinople’s involvement in this affair against Novgorod.⁵⁶ The strong ecclesiological message of the new type of *Pokrov* iconography, however, can also be interpreted in the light of the weakened position of the Orthodox Church at the end of the fourteenth century: in the South, the rapid Ottoman territorial gains threatened Constantinople and its Church, whereas in the West, the Union of Krewo in 1385 and the subsequent Catholicization of Lithuania challenged the unity of the Metropolitanate of Kyiv and all Rus which included the Orthodox territories of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy with Kyiv at the centre.⁵⁷ The Zverin *Pokrov*, however, demonstrates the resilience of Orthodoxy by visualizing its divine protection and by linking Constantinople with Novgorod.

It is precisely this ecclesiological agenda which connects the *Pokrov* icon of the Zverin Monastery with the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. There are numerous iconographic and compositional details common to the two iconographies: the symmetrical structure with saints in the gesture of supplication; the liturgical-Eucharistic references; the figure of the Theotokos; the parallelism between the segment of heaven and the Virgin’s veil held by angels, and, most importantly, the blessing figure of the Head of the Church over its Body in the central axis—the Theotokos *Orans* in the *Pokrov* and the winged Wisdom in the *Sophia* icon.⁵⁸ The Zverin *Pokrov* from the turn of the fifteenth century, in common with the *Royal Deesis*, is another important precursor of the *Novgorod Sophia*. They witness to the growing demand for visualizing ecclesiological ideas in a progressively concretized way in Novgorod icons.

⁵⁵ Pliukhanova, ‘Pokrov i Znamenie v Novgorode i v Pskove v XIV veke’, 26.

⁵⁶ M. V. Pechnikov and A. A. Turilov, ‘Ioann’, in *PE*, vol. XXIII, 2010, 454–61; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 246–8.

⁵⁷ For the Union of Krewo: Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 241–5.

⁵⁸ Gordienko, ‘“Pokrov” v novgorodskom izobrazitel’nom iskusstve’, 323–7.

PART IV

HISTORY

The previous chapters have revealed the symbolism of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and provided evidence regarding its dating and localization. Both the philological and iconographic analysis suggest that the great innovation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and its commentary is that they combine Orthodox ecclesiology and the medieval Russian concept of Wisdom in an innovative way, which I term as 'sophiological synthesis'. It is also clear that this 'sophiological synthesis' originated in Novgorod and directly connected with the Sophia Cathedral and both the icon and its commentary were created during the first half of the fifteenth century. The next and last stage of the analysis attempts a more precise dating and contextualization of the *Novgorod Sophia* which will reveal the concrete message, the function and historical significance of this iconography.

Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, and the Union of Florence

Novgorod and the Union of Florence

At the beginning of the fifteenth century Novgorod was a powerful commercial city and relatively independent.¹ This city in Northwest-Rus, which had a prominent role within the Hanseatic League, controlled the trade between huge Rus territories and Western Europe. Although officially a principality, Novgorod was governed by the elected assembly of boyars and aristocrats, the *veche*. Its foreign policy was determined by its relationship with the rival powers, Lithuania and ever-expanding Moscow. The head of the Novgorod Church was the Archbishop who was elected in Novgorod but consecrated in Moscow, by the Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus whose jurisdiction included not only Novgorod and the other Rus principalities but also the Orthodox part of Lithuania. Since the Rus Church was not independent, i.e. *autocephalous*, but was subordinate to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Rus Metropolitans were elected in Constantinople, although the Moscow Grand Princes made increasing attempts to interfere in their election and their policies. Novgorod's ecclesiastical dependence from the Metropolitan, therefore, was a powerful tool in the hands of Moscow in controlling Novgorod.

An outstanding figure in Novgorod's fifteenth-century history was Archbishop Evfimii II (1429–58) whose lengthy period of office contrasted with the rather brief tenures of his predecessors.² During his lifetime there occurred an event which, although not a local affair and was only very briefly mentioned in the

¹ For the history of Novgorod in the first half of the fifteenth century (with further bibliography): O. V. Kuz'mina, *Respublika Sviatoi Sofii* (Moscow: Veche, 2008), 222–303; M. C. Paul, 'Secular Power and the Archbishops of Novgorod before the Muscovite Conquest', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 2 (2007): 231–70; A. G. Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka* (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2001); J. Raba, 'Archiepiscopal Authority and Novgorodian Culture in the Fifteenth Century', *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 31/32 (1985): 351–7; J. Raba, 'Church and Foreign Policy in the Fifteenth-Century Novgorodian State', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 13, no. 1–2 (1979): 52–8; A. S. Khoroshev, *Tserkov' v sotsial'no-politicheskoj sisteme Novgorodskoj feodal'noi respubliki* (Moscow: Izd-vo Mosk. Un-ta, 1980), 81–110; V. L. Ianin, *Novgorodskie posadniki* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1962), 232–93; V. N. Bernadskii, *Novgorod i Novgorodskaja zemlia v XV veke* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), 200–63.

² For Evfimii II, see Chapter 11. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Archbishops of Novgorod were: Ioann (1388–1415); Simeon (1415–1421); Feodosii (1421–1423); Evfimii I (1423–1429) and Evfimii II.

Novgorod chronicles, provides an explanation for the visualization of an innovative ecclesiological message in an icon that utilized a pioneering visual language. This was the Union of Florence between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, signed in 1439. The subsequent chapters will argue that the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon was a Novgorodian, and more broadly, Russian response to the union with Rome. They will propose that the icon of Wisdom was a visual challenge to the underlying idea of ecclesiastical union by depicting Orthodoxy as it was perceived by the Russians in the fifteenth century. Furthermore, by asserting that the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, with its iconographic inventions, was driven by the Union of Florence, this part of the book will also highlight the significance of 1439 in the history of Russian art. It marked the beginning of a development, in the course of which an increasing number of Russian iconographic innovations appeared which employed, similarly to the *Novgorod Sophia*, biblical allegory as the main tool for visualizing ideas. This process reached one of its peaks in 1547, when the Kremlin icons were commissioned which led to the Viskovatyi Affair.

This premise may seem surprising as art-historical literature usually does not even mention the Union of Florence and its Russian rejection as an event which could have had any wide-reaching impact on the development of medieval Russian or, in particular, Novgorod art.³ This neglect, however, to a certain degree can be explained by the very nature of the historical situation: the consequences of the Union of Florence were not evident immediately after its declaration and it resulted in a highly uncertain situation not only in Rus, but throughout the whole Orthodox oikumene. It took years or rather decades for the real significance of the eventually rejected and thus unrealized union between the Orthodox and Catholics gradually to become crystallized.

The narrower ecclesiastical importance of this event, nonetheless, has never been questioned by historians who have highlighted the Russians' key role in the failure of the Union of Florence—a great historical project to unify Christendom under Rome's supremacy.⁴ It was primarily the threat of the expansion of the

³ The problem of the possible impact of the Florentine Union on Russian art has been raised regarding some isolated examples only, for example concerning Western elements in two bilateral icons from the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery: L. M. Evseeva, *Analoinye ikony v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi: Obraz i liturgiia* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2013), 171–89. The Large Sakkos of Metropolitan Fotii (Photius) was also analysed in the context of the Church Union by S. A. Beliaev, 'Neskol'ko nabliudenii o vremeni sozdaniia i prednaznachenii sakkosov mitropolita Fotiia', in *Pravoslavnyye sviatyni Moskovskogo Kremliia v istorii i kul'ture Rossii*, ed. I. A. Vorotnikova and S. A. Beliaev (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 216–25.

⁴ For the Union of Florence (with further bibliography): S. Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos und das Konzil von Ferrara-Florenz (1438/39): Das Byzantinische Kaisertum im Dialog mit dem Westen*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2013); M.-H. Blanchet, 'La question de l'Union des Églises (13e–15e Siècles): Historiographie et Perspectives', *Revue des études byzantines* 61 (2003): 5–48; P. Viti, ed., *Firenze e il Concilio del 1439*, 2 vols (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994); G. Alberigo, *Christian Unity: The Council of Ferrara-Florence 1438/39–1989* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991); Papadakis and

Ottoman Empire and the urgent need for military aid that led the Greeks, under pressure from the Byzantine emperor, John VIII Palaiologos (1425–48), to accept the decree of union predominantly on the terms dictated by the Latins. The decree was signed by Pope Eugene IV (1431–47) and Joseph II, the Patriarch of Constantinople (1416–39), as well as by the representatives of the local churches. The head of the Rus Church was Metropolitan Isidore (1437–41), a Greek humanist and a devoted protagonist of Church Union, who accepted the document in the name of the local Rus Church, which thus officially joined the union between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Two years later, however, in his letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Vasili II the Blind (1425–62), the Grand Prince of Moscow, rejected the union with Rome referring to the council of the Rus Church and asked a new Rus metropolitan from Constantinople to replace the ‘apostate’ Isidore.

The Slavic corpus of texts relating to the Union of Florence has been studied since the nineteenth century.⁵ One of the most prominent items of this corpus is the itinerary of the anti-unionist Simeon of Suzdal, a member of Isidore’s delegation in Florence, the first redaction of which, *The tale of Isidore’s Council*, was written during the early 1440s.⁶ The text describes the journey of the Rus delegation to Florence and the circumstances behind the signing of the union

Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071–1453 AD*, 357–409; J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

For the Byzantine reaction and consequences of the Union within the Patriarchate of Constantinople (with further bibliography): M.-H. Blanchet, ‘A New Byzantine Source Concerning the Reception of the Council of Florence: Theodore Agallianos’ Dialogue with a Monk against the Latins (ca. 1442)’, in *Laudator temporis acti: Studia in memoriam Ioannis A. Božilov*, ed. I. Biliarsky, vol. II. Ius, imperium, potestas, litterae, ars et archaeologia (Sofia: IK Gutenberg, 2018), 156–66; O. Halecki, *From Florence to Brest (1439–1596)* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968).

For the consequences of the Florentine Union in Rus (with further bibliography): O. A. Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona i ustanovlenie avtokefalii Russkoi Tserkvi* (Moscow and St Petersburg: Al’ians-Arkheo, 2009), 3–14 (historiographical survey); B. N. Floria, *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi: Drevnerusskoe i slavianskoe srednevekov’e* (Moscow: TSNTS ‘Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia’, 2007), 385–431; J. Krajcar, *Acta slavica Concilii Florentini: Narrationes et documenta* (Rome: Pontificium institutum orientalium studiorum, 1976); G. Alef, ‘Muscovy and the Council of Florence’, *Slavic Review* 20 (1961): 389–401; A. W. Ziegler, *Die Union des Konzils von Florenz in der russischen Kirche* (Würzburg: Rita, 1938).

⁵ O. L. Novikova, ‘Formirovanie i rukopisnaia traditsiia “Florentiiskogo tsikla” vo vtoroi polovine XV–pervoi polovine XVII v.’, *Ocherki feodal’noi Rossii* 14 (2010): 3–208; Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*; A. A. Turilov, ‘K istorii drevnerusskoi rukopisnoi traditsii sochinenii, sviazannykh s Ferraro-Florentiiskoi uniei’, in *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi: Drevnerusskoe i slavianskoe srednevekov’e*, by B. N. Floria (Moscow: TSNTS ‘Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia’, 2007), 382–7; V. E. Zema, ‘Florentiiskaia uniiia i avtokefalia Moskovskoi tserkvi’, *Cahiers du monde russe* 46, no. 1–2 (2005): 397–410; Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim*, 58–132; N. A. Kazakova, *Zapadnaia Evropa v russkoi pis’mennosti XV–XVI vekov: iz istorii mezhdunarodnykh kul’turnykh sviazei Rossii* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), 7–67; L. V. Cherepnin, ‘K Voprosu o russkikh istochnikakh po istorii Florentiiskoi unii’, *Srednie veka* 25 (1964): 176–87; Krajcar, *Acta slavica Concilii Florentini*; A. S. Pavlov, *Kriticheskie opyty po istorii drevneishei greko-russkoi polemiki* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. akademii nauk, 1878), 88–112; A. N. Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor drevne-russkikh polemicheskikh sochinenii protiv latinian, XI–XV v.* (Moscow: Tip. T. Ris’, 1875), 326–95.

⁶ Edition of the text: Novikova, ‘Formirovanie i rukopisnaia traditsiia “Florentiiskogo tsikla”’, 122–35. For the problems of dating (with bibliography): Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim*, 79–83; Krajcar, *Acta slavica Concilii Florentini*.

decree. Simeon's testimony was followed by texts in the 1450s and 1460s containing sharp criticism of the union with the Latins; their tone became especially harsh after the fall of Byzantium in 1453. The first Russian corpus of texts on the Union of Florence was created during the 1460s in the Kirillo-Belozersk and Trinity-St Sergii Monasteries.

The importance of the Union of Florence from the perspective of political or ecclesiastical ideology of Muscovy has also been studied extensively. The rejection of this union by the Rus Church and the Moscow Grand Prince became a point of reference for the Moscow Metropolitanate during its struggle for autocephalous status, achieved *de facto* in 1448, but *de jure* only in 1589 when it was officially confirmed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This rebuttal of the union, however, was equally important for Moscow's rulers who regarded themselves as defenders of the true faith and guardians of the Orthodox Church and, for this very reason, the heirs of Byzantine Orthodox emperors. According to the Russian perception, it was the Union of Florence and the apostasy of the Greeks that led to the fall of the Orthodox Second Rome in 1453. The continued existence of the new empire, therefore, depended on its rulers' fidelity to the true faith. This idea became explicit in the letters of the Pskovian monk, Filofei from 1520s which formulated the 'Third Rome' theory.⁷ Correspondingly, Nina Sinitsyna's major monograph on this idea begins with the analysis of the texts connected with the Union of Florence.⁸

Despite the profound impact that the Union of Florence had not only on the historical events but also, and even more importantly, on Russian ecclesiastical and political discourse, historians and, consequently, art historians in general have not attributed enough significance to the problems the Union had caused in the life of Rus cities, including that of Novgorod.

This oversight in part stems from the historical sources—the local chronicles which are strikingly laconic concerning the perception of the Union of Florence in Rus immediately after its proclamation. In describing the internal conflicts between the different cities in the period in question—e.g. the war of Pskov, Moscow, and Tver against Novgorod in 1440–1—they give only a very brief,

⁷ The 'Third Rome' theory has been widely discussed in not only Russian, but also anglophone publications. Amongst these, John Meyendorff's article, illuminating the ecclesiastical context of this concept, is especially helpful: J. Meyendorff, 'Was There Ever a "Third Rome"? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia', in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. J. J. Yiannias (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 45–60. See also with further bibliography: S. Torres Prieto, 'Between the Third Rome and the New Jerusalem: The Fall of Constantinople Viewed by Russians', in *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire*, ed. D. A. Hernández de la Fuente, S. Torres Prieto, and A. de Francisco Heredero (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 258–78; D. Ostrowski, '“Moscow the Third Rome” as Historical Ghost', in *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261–1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. S. T. Brooks (New York; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 170–9; D. B. Rowland, 'Moscow-The Third Rome or the New Israel?', *The Russian Review* 55 (1996): 591–614.

⁸ Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim*, 58–132.

often factual account of Isidore's stay in Rus after his return from Florence in 1440.⁹ Significantly, the Novgorod Chronicles themselves, under years 1441 and 1442, give the earliest and most detailed information about the ecclesiastical union in an explicitly anti-Latin tone.¹⁰ They term Isidore 'Roman metropolitan' and mention that he commemorated the Roman pope in Rus churches which had never happened since the Christianization of Rus. The text also includes the liturgical innovations whereby the Latin rite was allowed in Orthodox churches, as well as recording Vasilii II's opposition to Isidore. Otherwise, what is known about the Russian reaction to the Union is based on texts that were written after the actual events, at a time when the rejection of the Union was the official position of both the Russian Church in Moscow and the Moscow Grand Prince.

It is a mistake, however, to interpret the silence of the historical sources as indifference by Russian local communities or even clerics to the problem of the Church Union.¹¹ For an evaluation of the sources, one has to keep in mind how complex the situation after 1439 was for the Rus Church perplexed with the dilemma whether to accept the Union or disobey the canonical order of the Byzantine Church. Thus, this chapter faces the challenging task of linking the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon with events about which the historical evidences are silent. Conversely, the enigmatic allegorical visual and textual language of the *Novgorod Sophia* was an appropriate means to convey messages in a situation when it was difficult to speak out ideas explicitly. My other arguments are presented in the previous chapters analysing the visual references of the *Novgorod Sophia* to Orthodox anti-Latin theological arguments and concepts, as well as demonstrating how this icon visualizes an Orthodox identity which defined itself primarily against the Latins. All these references gained new significance in the light of the polemics against the Union of Florence.

The Apostolic Church of Divine Wisdom, Saint Sophia

Two letters of Vasilii II written to Constantinople in 1441 and 1451 are the most important documents concerning the Russian reception of the Florentine

⁹ Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 83–91.

¹⁰ *Novgorod First Chronicle*, younger redaction (A. N. Nasonov, ed., *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950), 421–2.) and *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*, younger redaction (PSRL, vol. IV/1/2 1925, 437). V. A. Vodov, 'Novgorod i Florentiiskaia uniiia', in *Vostochnaia Evropa v istoricheskoi retrospektive: k 80- letiiu V.T. Pashuto*, ed. T. N. Dzhakson, E. A. Mel'nikova, and V. T. Pashuto (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1999), 42; Ia. S. Lur'e, *Dve istorii Rusi XV veka: Rannie i pozdnie, nezavisimye i ofitsial'nye letopisi ob obrazovanii Moskovskogo gosudarstva* (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 1994), 107. While Iakov Lurie argued that the Chronicle entries were written shortly before 1447, Aleksandr Bobrov maintained that these entries of the younger redaction of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* were written simultaneously with the events. Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 73–4. See also: Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 83–4.

¹¹ Vodov, 'Novgorod i Florentiiskaia uniiia'.

Union.¹² In these epistles, the Moscow Grand Prince does not simply reject the Union with the Latins and calls it heresy but provides an ideological justification of the demand for the new autocephalous status of the Rus Church, independent from Constantinople. In the first, written in 1441 to Metrophanes II, the Patriarch of Constantinople (1440–3), Vasilii requests a new metropolitan from Constantinople in place of the heretical Isidore; in the second, addressed to the emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos (1449–53), he announces the Russian election of a new metropolitan, Iona (1448–61), the previous bishop of Ryazan, and thus the establishment of the *de facto* autocephalous status of the Metropolitanate of Kyiv and All Rus with its seat in Moscow.

Not merely had an enormous ecclesiastical significance, but this act was also of fundamental political importance. The letters of Vasilii II bear witness to the fact that the Union of Florence offered a political opportunity for Moscow and the Moscow Grand Prince was aware of this. The alleged apostasy of the Greeks opened new perspectives for the Moscow Metropolitanate to free itself from Byzantine ecclesiastical jurisdiction which was certainly also a political dependence on Constantinople. Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath of the Florentine Union the picture was far from clear. There was a great deal of uncertainty about the fate of both the Church Union and the Byzantine Empire. The letters of Vasilii II clearly reflect this uncertainty. They seemingly focus only on the concrete ecclesiastical situation. At the same time, however, the articulation of Russian demands for the independent Russian election of the metropolitan of Kyiv required a sophisticated justification. In Vasilii II's argument, the sophiological formulations have a central, albeit so far neglected role, although, as I shall argue, they express a specific Russian ecclesiology which determined the Russian position in the discourse on the Union of Florence—and provide an explanation for the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

In these two letters there are three references to Wisdom, once in the 1441 letter and twice in the 1451–2 epistle, always in key sentences.¹³ In 1441, Vasilii gives a broad historical context and outlines the circumstances of the Christianization of Rus. He relates the well-known narrative from the *Primary Chronicle* as to why Vladimir, the grand prince of Kyiv (980–1015) chose the 'Greek true faith' and not the Armenian, Islam, or Latin ones.¹⁴ The decision of the Rus grand prince is reinforced in the next sentence, by highlighting that it was Vladimir, 'the great,

¹² *Poslanie moskovskogo velikogo kniazia Vasiliia II Vasil'evicha konstantinopol'skomu patriarkhu Mitrofanu II (1441)*. Edition of the text: Floria, *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi*, 454–9. RIB, vol. VI, 525–36. For further editions, bibliography, as well as the history, historiography, and the analysis of the text: Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim*, 63–74.

Poslanie moskovskogo velikogo kniazia Vasiliia II Vasil'evicha imperatoru Konstantinu XI Paleologu (1451). Edition of the text: RIB, vol. VI, 575–86. See also: Sinitsyna, 74–7.

¹³ Floria, *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi*, 455. RIB, vol. VI, 528, 580–1, 584.

¹⁴ See Chapter 7.

new Constantine, the pious tsar of Rus land', who 'took to himself', i.e. invited a metropolitan:

He, the great new Constantine, the pious tsar of Rus land, Vladimir took the metropolitan of the Russian land to himself, into his own country, into the newly enlightened Orthodox Christianity from the imperial city's [Constantinople's] *holy great catholic and apostolic church of Divine Wisdom* and from the holy emperor who reigned at that time, the patriarch who governed the Church of God and the Divine saint synod.¹⁵

Vasilii points out that Vladimir's heirs also 'took to themselves' metropolitans, sometimes Greek, sometimes Rus clerics who were always appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarch and 'not by Rome, not by the pope and not by the Latins'.¹⁶ Furthermore, all these prelates adhered to the Orthodox faith, unlike the recent metropolitan, Isidore, whose heresies are described in detail by mentioning, among others, the *Filioque* (the teaching about the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father *and the Son*), the liturgical use of azymes, and the supremacy of the pope over the four patriarchates of the Pentarchy.¹⁷ The letter refers to the council of Rus hierarchs which denounced the decree of Union, signed and brought to Rus by Isidore, as heretical. For this reason, Vasilii asks the Patriarch to appoint a new metropolitan, and he suggests Iona as an ideal candidate.

Vasilii's letter accurately reflects the political significance of the Russian rejection of the Florentine Union. The ecclesiological concept of the letter is profoundly Byzantine. This ecclesiology, maintained Constantinople's significance within the Pentarchy on three grounds: (1) its true faith; the presence of (2) the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Patriarch); and (3) the emperor. Byzantine anti-Latin texts, as we have seen, challenged Rome's primacy on the basis of this ecclesiology: Rome's emperor is now in Constantinople and the Roman Church has lost its true faith, hence Constantinople is the centre of Christianity. Accordingly, in Vasilii's narrative, Vladimir invited the Rus metropolitan from the Church of Constantinople which complied with all the three aforementioned conditions: it was protected by the Byzantine emperor, it was governed by the Patriarch together with the synod (ecclesiastical hierarchy) and it had true faith which was highlighted in the description of Rus's baptism.

¹⁵ Взимает же в себе он великий новый Константин—а реку—благочестивый царь рускиа земля Владимир—на свое отчъство, на новопросвещенное христьянство, от святых великиа съборных и апостольскиа церкви Царствующаго града Премудрости Божия и от царствующаго в тогдашнее время святаго царя и от правящаго Божию церковь святейшаго патриарха и божественаго еже о нем священнаго свора, на русскую землю митрополита. *Poslanie* (1441). Floria, *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi*, 455.

¹⁶ *Poslanie* (1441). Floria, 456.

¹⁷ Floria, 457.

Significantly, however, there is another Church in Vasilii's letter which is in accordance with this Byzantine definition of the Church: the Rus Metropolitanate. It has true faith, it has a metropolitan, and, strikingly, it also has a tsar: 'the great, new Constantine, the pious tsar of Rus land', Vladimir and his heirs. The anachronistic—and arguably controversial—implication of this letter, namely that the Moscow grand prince Vasilii is Vladimir's heir who has a 'Rus land' follows from this Byzantine ecclesiological concept: Vasilii identifies the 'Rus land' with the Metropolitanate of Kyiv and All Rus (including its Lithuanian part) and himself with 'the pious tsar' in order to request a new metropolitan—his own candidate—for the Rus Church. Thus, the great significance of Vasilii's argument is that it appropriates the Byzantine ecclesiological concept of secular primacy and turns it against the Byzantines themselves. The only reason why he could do this was the Union of Florence—the accusation that the Greeks had lost one of the pillars of their own ecclesiology, the true faith. Unsurprisingly, the Union of Florence became the basis of the subsequent, more and more ambitious Russian ecclesiastical and political claims.

From this perspective, the fact that Vasilii names the Patriarchate of Constantinople as 'the apostolic church of Divine Wisdom' is of crucial importance. It contains a reference to the main church of Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia, an imperial foundation and the see of the Patriarch, with which the whole Byzantine Church is identified. The emphasis on Divine Wisdom, however, alludes also to the third pillar of Byzantine ecclesiology. It signifies the fact that the Church from which the Russians 'took to themselves' their metropolitan possessed the Divine Wisdom, that is true faith. Most importantly, however, Hagia Sophia connects the Byzantine and Rus Churches, which is the principal message of Vasilii's letter.

For the first time, the formula of 'the apostolic church of Divine Wisdom' appears in the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, regarding a remarkable event, the preservation of Novgorod from the Mongol invasion in 1238: 'God and the holy great catholic and apostolic church of Saint Sophia saved us.'¹⁸ Just as in Vasilii's letter, which utilizes a similar wording, Wisdom-Sophia refers to the Church, but in contrast with the letter of the grand prince, it denotes not the Church of Constantinople, but that of Novgorod. In the historical context of the thirteenth century, this Sophiological hint had an important meaning.

¹⁸ Новъ же городъ заступн Богъ, и святая и великая соборная и апостольская церковь святая София. Nasonov, *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, 76, 289. For an English translation: R. Michell and N. Forbes, trans., *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016-1471* (London: Camden Society, 1914), 84. A. S. Khoroshev, 'Novgorodskaiia Sviataia Sofiia i Pskovskaia Sviataia Troitsa po letopisnym dannym: iz istorii mestnykh patronal'nykh kul'tov', *Medievalia Ukrainika: Mental'nost' ta istoriia idei* 5 (1998): 14. See also: A. S. Khoroshev, 'Sofiiskii patronat po Novgorodskoi pervoi letopisi', *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: Istorii i arkheologiia* 11 (1997): 205-12.

In 1204, Constantinople was sacked by the Fourth Crusade and the Hagia Sophia was looted: its miraculous icons, relics, liturgical objects, and treasures were plundered by the crusaders and the Latin rite was celebrated. The Latin capture of the city had a profound impact on the entire Byzantine commonwealth, but for Novgorod this event was particularly important. In the 1210s and 1220s, Dobrynia Iadreibovich was the archbishop of Novgorod under the name Antonii (1209–18; 1225–8). After making a pilgrimage to Constantinople in ca. 1200, probably shortly before 1204, Antonii wrote a detailed itinerary to the holy places of Constantinople, the *Pilgrim Book*, in which the focal point is the Hagia Sophia.¹⁹ Aleksei Grippius has demonstrated that the appearance of unique Sophiological references in the Novgorod Chronicles in the early thirteenth century can be linked directly to the activities of Archbishop Antonii.²⁰ It is very likely that he was also either the writer or the commissioner of the text in the same *First Novgorod Chronicle*, ‘On the captivation of Constantinople by the Franks in 1204’.²¹ Furthermore, the link between the two Sophia churches in Constantinople and Novgorod, both perceived as new Jerusalem, was reinforced by the precious relics brought by Antonii from the former to Novgorod: a piece from the cross of Christ and the so-called ‘tomb of the Lord’.²²

In 1238, while Constantinople was under Latin rule and Rus was under Mongol threat, the words ‘God and the holy great catholic and apostolic church of Saint Sophia saved us’ might have conveyed the following message: although the Constantinople Hagia Sophia is in the hands of the Latins and the Mongols had destroyed the cities of Rus (in 1240, even Kyiv itself), the Hagia Sophia in Novgorod stands and maintains the Orthodox faith. Now the Novgorod Sophia is ‘the holy great catholic and apostolic church’ which protects the city: ‘where Saint Sophia is, there is Novgorod’—is another famous phrase of the *First Novgorod Chronicle*.²³

¹⁹ For the edition of the text, its textual history and further bibliography: A. Jouravel, *Die Kniga palomnik des Antonij von Novgorod: Edition, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2019).

²⁰ A. A. Gippius, ‘Arkhiepiskop Antonii i novgorodskii kul’t Sofii’, in *Khoroshie dni: Pamiati Aleksandra Stepanovicha Khorosheva*, ed. A. E. Musin (Veliky Novgorod, St Petersburg, and Moscow: LeopArt, 2009), 181–98.

²¹ *Povest’ o vziatii Tsar’grada friagami*, Nasonov, *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis’ starshego i mladshego izvodov*, 46–9. See also: N. A. Meshcherskii, ‘Drevnerusskaia Povest’ o vziatii Tsar’grada friagami kak istochnik po istorii Vizantii’, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 9 (1956): 170–85.

²² Gippius, ‘Arkhiepiskop Antonii i novgorodskii kul’t Sofii’, 187–8. For the cross relic: Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, 130–4. See also: I. A. Shalina, ‘Ikonografiia Vozdvizheniia kresta v novgorozhskom iskusstve i ee vizantiiskie istoki’, *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 1 (2005): 76–123; M. B. Pliukhanova, ‘O traditsiakh sofiiskikh i uspenskikh tserkvei v russkikh zemliakh do XVI veka’, in *Lotmanovskii sbornik*, ed. E. V. Permiakov, vol. II (Moscow: Izd-vo RGGU, 1997), 498–501. For the tomb: T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, ‘O tsaregradskikh relikviakh Antonii Novgorodskogo’, in *Vostochnokhristianskie relikvii*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2003), 398–414; E. A. Gordienko, ‘Chasovnia Groba Gospodnia v Sofiiskom sobore’, *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 9 (2003): 94–130.

²³ Khoroshev, ‘Novgorodskaiia Sviataia Sofia i Pskovskaia Sviataia Troitsa’, 8.

This Novgorodian formula in the 1441 letter of the Moscow Grand Prince has a pointed message. First, it subtly creates a parallel between the situations in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. It reminds the readers, that just as at the time of the Crusader sack of Constantinople, so also now, after the Union of Florence, Hagia Sophia is in the hands of the Latins. Metropolitan Iona's 1452 *Testament* is more explicit where he complains about 'the commemoration of the name of the pope in the holy, apostolic great church, Saint Sophia'.²⁴ Secondly, by emphasizing the fact that Vladimir, 'the tsar of Rus land', invited a metropolitan from 'the apostolic Church of Divine Wisdom', Vasilii II simultaneously claims that, as a result of this invitation, Rus also has the 'apostolic church of Divine Wisdom' which stands and keeps the true faith, in spite of the apostasy of Isidore. Since his addressee is the unionist Metrophanes II, he arguably levels the same accusation against the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is not difficult to see the polemical intention of the reference to the 'Church of Divine Wisdom': it contrasts the current heresy of the Constantinople Hagia Sophia and the Orthodoxy of the Russian Hagia Sophia.

As a result, the function of the sophiological terminology in Vasilii's letter is to articulate a specific Russian ecclesiology in which, in embryonic form, the idea of succession between the Byzantine and Russian Churches appear. The fundamental claim of this ecclesiology is that the Church is there where the true Orthodox faith is kept. Thus, if the true faith disappears from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a new Church (the Russian one) can take its place. The symbol of this idea of ecclesiastical succession is the Hagia Sophia cathedral.

This ecclesiology becomes explicit in the 1451/52 letter of Vasilii, written in an increasingly confident tone. It describes a very confused situation within the Byzantine Church ('even we do not know whether there is a Patriarch or not in Constantinople') of which the Russians took full advantage: the Rus Church made itself independent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.²⁵ The aim of Vasilii's letter is to request the *post facto* blessing on the newly elected metropolitan, Iona from 'the holy great catholic and apostolic church of Divine Wisdom, Saint Sophia of Constantinople'.²⁶

The juxtaposition between Orthodoxy of the Rus Church and the heresy of Isidore is the leitmotiv of this letter, as a justification for the otherwise uncanonical election of Iona. The text gives a definition of Orthodoxy which was, according to Vasilii, defended by the Russians but betrayed by Isidore:

²⁴ *Gramota dukhovnaia*. Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 379–84 (381).

²⁵ *Poslanie (1451–52)*. RIB 6, 584.

²⁶ И церковь наша русская святейшая митропольи Руския святыя Божия вселенския сворныя апостольския церкви премудрости Божия святыя София цариградския благословения треууеть... *Poslanie (1451–52)*. RIB 6, 584.

And we, together with the bishops, priests and the whole Orthodox Christianity of our land, begged him [Isidore] to bring the piety of our Orthodox Christianity to us that we had received from our Lord Jesus Christ and his saint Apostles and from the divine, holy and God-bearing Fathers and ecumenical teachers, from the holy canons and from *the holy catholic and apostolic church of Divine Wisdom, Saint Sophia*, from your pious empire, from Constantinople, and from our forefather, the pious and equal-to-the-apostle grand prince Vladimir, the tsar of the whole Rus land [всѣя русьская земля самодержьца] who baptised and enlightened the whole Rus land with holy baptism; and also we asked him not to bring to us anything which is alien, strange, new and different from our Orthodox Christian faith.²⁷

This definition of Orthodoxy is an extended version of that given by Leo of Ohrid in his 1054 Anti-Latin polemics and visualized in the Orthodox sanctuary decorations in the Sophia Churches of Ohrid and Kyiv.²⁸ Orthodoxy is the teaching of Christ transmitted by the Apostles and by the fathers of the Ecumenical Councils. This hierarchy of the sources of true faith, however, is amplified here by ‘the holy great catholic and apostolic church of Divine Wisdom, Saint Sophia’, the Byzantine Empire, and, significantly, Vasilii’s own ‘forefather’, Grand Prince Vladimir.

An important new element in the sophiological terminology of Vasilii’s second letter is the tautological formula ‘Sophia—Divine Wisdom’ which appears there twice. The tautology is striking whilst it expresses the essence of ecclesiology of Vasilii: ‘Sophia’ highlights the continuity between the Byzantine and Rus Churches, whereas the ‘Divine Wisdom’ refers to the true Christian faith. The word combination ‘Sophia—Divine Wisdom’ also has a Novgorodian origin. It was used by Anthony for the first time, in his *Pilgrim Book*: ‘we arrived in Constantinople by the grace of God and with the aid of Saint Sophia, that is to say, of Wisdom, the ever-existent Word’.²⁹ Frequent in the Novgorod chronicles from the thirteenth century onwards, the tautological formula ‘Saint Sophia, Divine Wisdom’ became the title of the third redaction of the Novgorod Sophia commentary, the earliest example of which has survived in the manuscript of

²⁷ Молихомъ его [Isidore] много, да принесеть къ намъ нашего православного христьянства благоустье, еже прияхомъ отъ Господа нашего Исуса Христа, и отъ святыхъ его Апостолъ, и отъ божественныхъ святыхъ и богосносныхъ отецъ, учителей вселенскихъ и отъ всятыхъ ихъ и священныхъ правилъ, и отъ святыхъ зворныхъ и и апостольскія Церкви Премудрости Божія Святыя Софьи, отъ вашия благоуствия державы, от Цариграда, и от нашего прародителя, благоуствияго и святого и равна Апостоломъ Великого Князя Владимира, всея русьская земля самодержьца, крестившаго и просвѣтившаго всю русьскую землю святымъ крещениемъ а инаго, страна и нова и тужда благоуствия наша православныя христьянска веры, молихомъ его, не приносити къ намъ. *Poslanie* (1451–52). RIB 6, 580–1.

²⁸ See Chapter 7.

²⁹ ‘Бжъимъ маторьдемъ и помощью сѣта софьи иже глетса прмдрть пріосущное слово.’ Jouravel, *Die Kniga palomnik des Antonij von Novgorod*, 230. Translation by G. Majeska: G. Majeska, ‘Russian Pilgrims in Constantinople’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 93.

Efrosin, the monk of Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, written in the 1470s.³⁰ More importantly, however, it appears as an inscription in the freshly restored bilateral icon from the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral painted in the first half of the fifteenth century and considered to be the oldest extant Sophia icon (Cat. 1; Fig. 0.4).

Thus, in the light of Vasiliï's letter, this icon and its 'sophiological synthesis' gains a new meaning. It is not simply an image of the Orthodox Church which visualizes the Orthodox sanctuary and thus recalls the Orthodox Eucharistic teaching with all its anti-Latin implications, but also directly reflects the Russian arguments formulated after the Florentine Union. This message will be clear if the starting point of the icon's analysis is the observation, discussed in the previous chapters, that the *Novgorod Sophia* is a transformed version of the *Royal Deesis*. As we have seen, the *Royal Deesis* is an anti-Latin image which is an Orthodox response to the Catholic ecclesiology expressed in the *Coronation of the Virgin* iconographies where the Royal Virgin is the symbol of the Roman Church. The Orthodox *Royal Deesis*, in order to challenge this pictorial papal doctrine, borrowed the figure of imperial Theotokos but located it within the transformative context of the Orthodox *Deesis*. Here Christ, the imperial Bridegroom of the Mother of God, appeared simultaneously as Byzantine emperor and Orthodox Patriarch. Thus, the image became a powerful expression of Byzantine ecclesiology—the Pentarchy and the Constantinopolitan idea of *secular primacy*: the spiritual and secular centres of Christianity coincide, since there is only one emperor of the Christians, the Byzantine one; Byzantium is the new Rome, hence the Patriarchate of Constantinople has the same primacy as the First Rome had before the schism.

We have also seen that the great innovation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon was that it replaced this Constantinopolitan image of Christ by the dual image of Wisdom: the winged Sophia—the body of the Church—and the blessing Wisdom—the head of the Church—whilst Sophia received the imperial insignia, i.e. the ecclesiological attributes, of the Theotokos. In the context of the Florentine Union, the purpose of this transformation is clear. The *Novgorod Sophia* icon, in common with the letters of Vasiliï II, conveys a novel Russian ecclesiology based not on the idea of Pentarchy, but the concept of Hagia Sophia. The Hagia Sophia is the symbol of the true faith, the opposition to the Latins, and the succession between the Byzantine and Rus Churches, respectively.

³⁰ KB 22–1099, f. 221v. For this redaction of the Sophia commentary, see Chapter 12. I interpret these words in the commentary as implicit reference to the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral which will be explicit in some sixteenth-century and later versions of the commentary. See for example the Apocalypse from the library of the Moscow Theological Academy (MDA 16, ff. 99r–99v). In the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, the formula 'Saint Sophia, Divine Wisdom' appears under year 1234 for the first time, by mentioning the Lithuanians' attack: Nasonov, *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, 73, 283–4. Cf. Khoroshev, 'Novgorodskaiia Sviataia Sofia i Pskovskaia Sviataia Troitsa', 10.

The ultimate clue to the anti-unionist interpretation of the icon is the seven pillars of Sophia's throne upon the rock-footstool. In the *Commentary* the seven pillars are interpreted as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 11:1–3). Nevertheless, Slavonic questions-and-answers and liturgical texts reveal that these seven gifts were manifested in the Seven Ecumenical Councils which formulated the doctrinal pillars of the Church.³¹ This idea appeared explicit in the late-fifteenth-century Novgorod icon '*Wisdom has built her house*' from the Malo-Kirillov Monastery where Sophia's throne also has seven pillars, visually associated with the representation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils (Fig. 4.3).³² The teaching of the Seven Ecumenical Council constitutes the rock upon which Christ-Wisdom has built his Church. As we have seen, in anti-Latin literature, this is the Orthodox interpretation of the main biblical reference of the papal doctrine of supremacy which is also quoted by the Sophia commentary: 'upon this rock I will build my church' (Matt 16:19). It is the *Novgorod First Chronicle* in which the Council of Florence is called the 'Eighth Council' for the first time (1441), which subsequently became its Russian name.³³ The epithet 'eighth' has a sharp polemical edge: Wisdom's house can have only seven pillars and not more. The Eighth Council betrayed the Hagia Sophia and the Divine Wisdom. The analysis of the meaning of the *Novgorod Sophia* provides a strong indication that the *Novgorod Sophia* was a Russian reaction to the Florentine 'Eighth' Ecumenical Council.

³¹ See Chapters 1 and 5.

³² For the '*Wisdom has built her house*' icon of Malo-Kirillov Monastery (GTG, no. 28830) see Chapters 4 and 5.

³³ *Novgorod First Chronicle*, younger redaction. Nasonov, *Novgorodskaia perviaia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, 421.

Evfimii II, Archbishop of Novgorod

Evfimii's Patronage

The dating of the *Novgorod Sophia* suggests that its commissioner was Archbishop Evfimii II (1429–58).¹ Prior to his election, he was the hegumen (abbot) of the Lisitskii Monastery, famous of its strong ascetical traditions, scriptorium, and links with Mount Athos.² Although he was elected in 1429, he was consecrated only in 1434, and not in Moscow, but in Smolensk, by Metropolitan Gerasim (1432–5), the candidate of the Lithuanian grand duke, Švitrigaila (1430–2). After his death, Evfimii was venerated as saint and officially canonized in 1547.

Historians emphasize that the power of the Novgorod archbishop was particularly strong in Evfimii's time and included legal, economic, military control and direct political authority.³ His innovative policies within and outside Novgorod were accompanied by extremely active cultural patronage. The historian Joel Raba attempted to find a direct connection between these two aspects of Evfimii's activity: he distinguished his 'innovative' period from the 'traditionalist' and 'populist' ones, respectively, highlighting some crucial events in Novgorod's conflict with Lithuania and Moscow as the main driving forces of his policies and artistic-literary commissions.⁴ According to Raba, Evfimii's consecration in Smolensk was an organic part of his anti-Muscovite political plans which were

¹ For Evfimii II with bibliography: A. A. Turilov and M. A. Shibaev, 'Evfimii II Viazhishchskii', in *PE*, vol. XVII, 2008, 432–42. See also: I. V. Antipov, *Novgorodskaiia arkhitektura vremeni arkhiepiskopov Evfimiia II i Iony Otenskogo* (Moscow: Indrik, 2009); Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi*, 70–105; O. V. Sevast'ianova, 'Novgorodskaiia chetvertaia letopis' kak istochnik po izucheniiu politicheskikh vzgliadov novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Evfimiia II', *Drevniaia rus': Voprosy medievistiki* 2 (2010): 56–73; Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 93–217; V. A. Nikitin, 'Zhitie i trudy svt. Evfimiia, arkhiepiskopa novgorodskogo', *Bogoslovskie trudy* 24 (1983): 260–306; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 68–89; Khoroshev, *Tserkov' v sotsial'no-politicheskoi sisteme novgorodskoi feodal'noi respubliki*, 87–110; Raba, 'Archiepiscopal Authority'; Raba, 'Church and Foreign Policy'; J. Raba, 'Evfimij II., Erzbischof von Gross-Novgorod und Pskov: Ein Kirchenfürst als Leiter einer weltlichen Republik', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 25, no. 2 (1977): 161–73; Ianin, *Novgorodskie posadniki*, 274–302; Bernadskii, *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia v XV veke*, 237–63.

² A. G. Bobrov, 'Knigopisnaia masterskaia Lisitskogo monastiria (konets XIV–pervaia polovina XV v.)', in *Knizhnye tsentry Drevnei Rusi. XI–XVI vv.: Raznye aspekty issledovaniia*, ed. D. S. Likhachev (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1991), 78–98; A. I. Semenov, 'Lisitskii Monastyr'–prigorodnyi tsentr novgorodskogo knigopisaniia', *TODRL* 17 (1961): 369–73.

³ Paul, 'Secular Power and the Archbishops of Novgorod before the Muscovite Conquest'; Raba, 'Evfimij II., Erzbischof'.

⁴ Raba, 'Evfimij II., Erzbischof'.

thwarted firstly by the agreement between Moscow and Novgorod in 1435 that recognized Moscow's suzerainty and then by the truce of Novgorod with the Lithuanian rival of Švitrigaila, the grand duke Sigismund Kęstutaitis (1432–40) in 1436. Aleksandr Bobrov, however, has amended this reading, by suggesting that the Union of Florence was the real turning point in Evfimii's intertwined cultural and political activities: he asserts that the late 1430s was not the end of Evfimii's innovative, anti-Muscovite policy, but, on the contrary, its beginning.⁵ Although Bobrov's hypothesis concerning the significance of the Florentine Union in Novgorod's cultural and political life has not met with universal scholarly agreement, the conclusions of this study require a reconsideration of some of Bobrov's arguments.⁶ This investigation will reinforce the significance of the union with Rome in the history of Novgorod and thus the proposed dating of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography to around year 1439. Nevertheless, these considerations will also indicate that the appearance of a new common enemy, the Latin Constantinople, created a new alliance of interest on the ecclesiastical level between Moscow and Novgorod, regardless of their rivalry.

1438 and 1439 were remarkable years in the history of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral when the Novgorod chronicles recorded two unparalleled miracles. In 1438 or 1439, the verger (ponomar) Aaron, who spent the night with 'his fellows' (товарищи свои) in the church, had a vision: he saw the deceased Novgorod prelates processing to and from the altar, illuminated by divine light, just as the priests do during the liturgical services.⁷ The Novgorod hierarchs went to the Cherson icon of the Theotokos where they chanted for long hours and then disappeared into the altar. Evfimii, hearing about the miracle, ordered the tomb of Prince Vladimir and his wife Anna, the founders of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral who were buried here, to be gilded.

On 4 October 1439, a second miracle showed the identity of one of those deceased hierarchs. According to the Novgorod chronicles, on this day a falling stone miraculously revealed the forgotten grave of Archbishop Ioann (1165–85, also known as Iliia). Ioann was the hierarch who allegedly held the *Znamenie* icon

⁵ Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 167–216.

⁶ For a criticism of Bobrov's concept: Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 97–100, 137–44.

⁷ There are two versions of the *Legend of the Vision of Aaron*: the independent legends which survived in manuscripts from the first half of the sixteenth century onwards, and in Novgorod Chronicles—*Fourth Novgorod Chronicle* (under the year 1458): PSRL IV/I/2 1925, 491; *Third Novgorod Chronicle*: A. F. Bychkov, ed., *Novgorodskiiia letopisi: tak nazvannyyia Novgorodskaiia vtoraiia i Novgorodskaiia tret'ia letopisi* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akademii nauk, 1879), 271–2. For the history of the legend: Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 184–5; A. Poppe, 'On the So-Called Chersonian Antiquities', in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. H. Birnbaum and M. S. Flier, vol. I (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), 84–7; L. A. Dmitriev, *Zhitiinye povesti russkogo severa kak pamiatniki literatury XIII—XVII vv.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 171–4. According to the *Third Novgorod Chronicle*, the vision occurred in 1438. Engelina Smirnova accepts this dating, whereas Bobrov, referring to the evidence of the *Younger First Novgorod Chronicle*, dates the event to 1439. Cf. Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 209.

which defended Novgorod from the troops of Suzdal and other principalities in 1169 (Figs 9.16, 11.1). The following night Ioann appeared to Evfimii in a dream, asking him to make 4 October the feast day of all hierarchs and princes buried in the cathedral. Following this vision, Evfimii prompted the canonization of nine or ten Novgorodian prelates on a local level (only in the Archbishopric of Novgorod).⁸ This simultaneous canonization of a series of local saints was a unique act which foreshadowed the systematic canonization of Russian saints one hundred years later, at the time of the coronation of the first Russian tsar (in 1547 and 1549), on the initiative of Metropolitan Makarii.⁹

As a part of this grand project, Evfimii commissioned a series of hagiographical works. Their author was an outstanding writer of his time: Pachomius (Pakhomii) the Serb (Logofet), a monk from Mount Athos who arrived in Novgorod during the second half of 1430s and left in the early 1440s.¹⁰ There is a good reason to believe that Evfimii invited Pachomius to Novgorod in Moscow in 1437 where he went to meet the freshly elected metropolitan, the Greek humanist, Isidore.¹¹ In Novgorod, Pachomius supplemented the old legend of Archbishop Ioann with new narratives and wrote panegyric and liturgical texts about the miracle of the *Znamenie* icon as well as the *Life of Varlaam of Khutyn*, another archbishop of Novgorod (†1192) buried in the Sophia Cathedral.¹² Subsequently he worked successively in the greatest Russian monasteries which were also the most important Russian literary centres: the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery and the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery—where he had a remarkable career as the author of liturgical and hagiographical texts and as a translator. In the early 1460s, Pachomius returned to Novgorod to write the life of his first patron.

Bobrov connects the two aforementioned miraculous events at the Sophia Cathedral directly with the Union of Florence, signed on 6 June. News about the ecclesiastical union could have reached Novgorod roughly by early autumn 1439. As we have seen, the Novgorod Chronicles contain the earliest and most explicitly hostile records of the Florentine Council from 1440/1441.¹³ Likewise,

⁸ Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 185.

⁹ E. E. Golubinskii, *Istoriia kanonizatsii sviatykh v russkoi tserkvi* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1903), 40–109.

¹⁰ For Pachomius (with bibliography): Z. N. Isidorova, 'K Voprosu o proiskhozhdenii prozvischa Logofet u Pakhomiiia Serba', *Slovène* 8 (2019): 113–39; G. M. Prokhorov, 'Pakhomii Serb', in *SKKDR*, vol. II/2, 1989, 167–77; V. Iablonskii, *Pakhomii Serb i ego agiograficheskie pisaniia* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1908).

¹¹ For a chronography of Pachomius's stay in Novgorod: Isidorova, 'K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii prozvischa Logofet u Pakhomiiia Serba', 125–6. The author's hypothesis about Pachomius's service to Isidore is challenged not only by Pachomius's later explicitly anti-unionist texts, but also those ones which he wrote during his first stay in Novgorod, as I shall argue below.

¹² V. M. Kirillin, 'Slovo pokhval'noe ikone Presviatoi Bogoroditsy 'Znamenie' Pakhomiiia Logofeta', *Drevniaia Rus': Voprosy medievistiki* 47 (2012): 79–84; Dmitriev, *Zhitiinye povesti russkogo severa*, 24–35, 123–8, 166–8; Iablonskii, *Pakhomii Serb i ego agiograficheskie pisaniia*, 120–3.

¹³ *Novgorod First Chronicle*, younger redaction (Nasonov, *Novgorodskaia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*), 421. See also Chapter 10.

Simeon of Suzdal, the author of *The tale of Isidore's Council*, mentioned that he had written his anti-Latin itinerary in Novgorod in the summer of 1440, on Evfimii's commission.¹⁴ Both facts indicate that the Archbishop of Novgorod was opposed to the Florentine Union from the outset. The two visions of 1438 or 1439 reinforce this statement. They are not simply witness to a renewed interest in the glorious Orthodox historical past of Novgorod but are also cryptic responses in narrative form to the ecclesiastical union.

The *Legend of the Vision of Aaron* contains two clues to this anti-unionist message. The first is the Cherson icon of the Theotokos, in front of which the prelates chanted, and the second is the reaction of Evfimii to this event: the renovation of the tombs of the founders of the Novgorod Sophia. Art historians have associated the Cherson icon with a lost Hodogetria icon, the oklad (cover) of which, however, has partially survived.¹⁵ What is significant here is not the icon itself, but its name. Cherson is a toponym, a reference to the Byzantine city in Crimea where the grandfather of Vladimir, the Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized in 988.¹⁶ The icon was believed to have been brought by the freshly baptized Vladimir to Rus and then by his grandson to Novgorod. The prayer of the Novgorod holy hierarchs, the pillars of the city's Orthodoxy, in front of this icon—a symbol of the Byzantine faith, chosen by the Grand Prince of Kyiv and his successors—was a confession of Orthodoxy. This enigmatic reference contextualizes Evfimii's decision to gild the princely tomb at the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral. The link of the vision with the Christianization of Rus is explicit in some versions of the text: 'Archbishop Evfimii ordered the tomb of Prince Vladimir to be gilded who was the grandchild of the Grand Prince Vladimir who baptised the Rus land.'¹⁷ These words, together with the entire narrative clearly echo the 1441 letter of Vasili II in which the grand prince identified the faith of Hagia Sophia with the faith chosen by 'the pious tsar of Rus land, Vladimir'.¹⁸

The narrative about Archbishop Ioann's tomb in the Sophia Cathedral is also significant because of its hint at the miracle of the *Znamenie* icon occurred in 1169. It is apparently not coincidental that Pachomius the Serb devoted two texts to this event during his stay in Novgorod. Likewise, it is also not accidental that, supposedly in Evfimii's time, a new iconographic type was developed representing the wondrous preservation of Novgorod from the Suzdal troops with the aid of the icon.¹⁹ Scholars usually stress that this narrative about the *Znamenie* icon

¹⁴ Novikova, 'Formirovanie i rukopisnaia traditsiia "Florentiiskogo tsikla"', 123, 131.

¹⁵ Nersesyan, *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, 83–8; Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, 242–8.

¹⁶ Poppe, 'On the So-Called Chersonian Antiquities'.

¹⁷ Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 185.

¹⁸ See Chapter 10.

¹⁹ For the *Battle between Novgorod and Suzdal* iconography with further bibliography: Nersesyan et al., *Holy Russia*, 126–7; Durand, Giovannoni, and Rapti, *Sainte Russie*, 174–5; Nersesyan, *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, 308–13; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 83–6, 100, 150–4, 217–20, 228–30.

promotes the idea of Novgorodian independence from Moscow, a fundamental political issue for Novgorod in the fifteenth century. In 1440–1, Novgorod was at war with the combined troops of Moscow, Tver, and Pskov. Nevertheless, the chief message of the legend is not merely the idea of independence: it draws a parallel between besieged Novgorod and Constantinople. Although the Byzantine imperial city was frequently attacked by a multitude of enemies (most importantly, by the Avars in 626), it was defended by the Mother of God and her icon. The Constantinopolitan processions with the famous Byzantine Theotokos icons were intended to re-enact these escapes of the city.²⁰ The text reveals that the same kinds of Constantinopolitan miracles occurred in Novgorod during the battle with the Suzdalians: the procession with the flying and tearing icon, accompanied by the prayer to the Mother of God and, as a result, the humiliation of the enemy. Furthermore, the *Znamenie* icon itself also has a reference to the Constantinopolitan Blachernai church.²¹ Finally, the iconography of the *Znamenie* (Fig. 9.16), as we have seen, visualizes the main tenets of Byzantine Orthodoxy and conveys an anti-Latin Eucharistic agenda. Thus, the great Novgorod miracles of the *Znamenie* signified that both cities, Novgorod and Constantinople, were defended by the Mother of God because of their Orthodox faith.

The same parallelism between Constantinople and Novgorod appears in the icon *Battle between Novgorod and Suzdal (Sign of the Mother of God)*, the earliest example of which in the Tretyakov Gallery has been dated by Engelina Smirnova to the first half or middle of the fifteenth century (Fig. 11.1).²² The icon represents the narrative in three rows: the procession with the *Znamenie* icon held by Archbishop Ioann is depicted in the upper row, the negotiation with the Suzdalians is in the middle one and the miraculous battle is represented in the lower row. The ‘indestructible walls’ and the churches of the city defended by God create an architectural frame linking the three parts of the icon. The identifiable building of the Sophia Cathedral in the upper row is an intertwined reference to both Novgorod and Constantinople.

In the context of these textual and visual narratives, it is tempting to interpret the stone falling on Ioann’s tomb in the Sophia Cathedral on 4 October 1439 as a heavenly warning about Novgorod’s primary duty to keep the true faith so as not to lose the Divine protection. Consequently, the descriptions of the two great miracles in the Novgorod Sophia church might have intended to underscore the significance of the ecclesiastical union. The controversy over this union had

²⁰ A. M. Lidov, ‘Prostranstvennye ikony: Chudotvornoe deistvo s Odigitriei Konstantinopol’skoi’, in *Ierotopiia: Prostranstvennye ikony i obrazy-paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul’ture* (Moscow: Feoriia, 2009), 38–69; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 37–59; Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii*, 243–74.

²¹ See Chapter 8.

²² GTG, no. 14454. Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis’ Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 217–20.



Fig. 11.1. *The battle between Novgorod and Suzdal*, icon from Novgorod, mid-fifteenth century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

already begun in 1437 in Novgorod. After Evfimii had met Isidore in Moscow in the summer, in the autumn of the same year, Isidore had left for Florence via Novgorod where he spent some weeks in October. It seems, therefore, highly plausible that the conflict between Isidore's humanistic-unionist and Evfimii's

Russian monastic worldviews had come to the surface even before the union was signed.²³ This suggestion implies that Pachomius's invitation to Novgorod might have been motivated, at least partially, by the opposition to the Greek unionist plans.

Evfimii reacted to the new situation created by the Council of Florence with an unprecedentedly intense programme of cultural patronage. This initiative was driven by religious and ecclesiastical, not secular factors. The focal point of Evfimii's patronage was the Sophia Cathedral itself and the canonization of its saints: new hagiographical texts were commissioned, the cathedral's tombs were gilded and renovated, the stone walls were whitewashed, a bell tower was built and a new lavish epitaphios (liturgical veil with the embroidered image of Lamentation) was made; finally, as we shall see, the main iconostasis was enlarged.²⁴ But there was another, overlooked, yet very significant element of Evfimii's novel patronage. It was Evfimii who incorporated the *Typikon of Jerusalem* (regulation of liturgical services), with revised and unified liturgical texts and order of services, into the liturgical practices of the Saint Sophia Cathedral. The *Typikon of Jerusalem* was introduced to Rus by Metropolitan Kiprian (1390–1406), to replace the earlier *Typikon of St. John Studios*.²⁵ The *Typikon of Jerusalem* was disseminated rapidly in Moscow and in the neighbouring principalities—except for Novgorod. The extant large six (of the original twelve) parchment volumes of the *Menaia* of the Sophia Cathedral, written between 1438 and 1441, containing the daily liturgical texts in monthly order, bear witness to the fact that the Union of Florence forced the archbishop of Novgorod to harmonize Novgorod's liturgical practices with those of Moscow and other Rus principalities.²⁶

According to the historical sources, the most significant field of Evfimii's patronage was architecture.²⁷ The greatest project of the first period of his office was the construction of the Faceted Palace in the archiepiscopal yard in 1433.²⁸

²³ Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 197–8.

²⁴ For the bell tower: Bychkov, *Novgorodskii letopisi*, 272. See also: E. A. Gordienko, *Vladychnaia palata novgorodskogo kremlia* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1991), 15. For the *Pucezh Epitaphios* (MMK): A. S. Petrov, 'Pucezhskaia plashchanitsa 1441 goda i novgorodskoe shi'e vremeni arkhiepiskopa Evfimiia II', *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 4 (2011): 226–40.

²⁵ For the introduction of the *Typikon of Jerusalem* in Rus: Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 122–4. For Metropolitan Kiprian: A. A. Turilov, B. N. Floria, and A. S. Preobrazhenskii, 'Kiprian', in *PE*, vol. XXXIII, 2013, 630–50; G. M. Prokhorov and N. F. Drobolenkova, 'Kiprian', in *SKKDR*, vol. II/1, 1988, 464–73; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 197–260.

²⁶ E. M. Shvarts, 'O Biblioteke novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora: Sostav, sistema rasstanovki rukopisei', *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 4 (1992): 236–44; E. M. Shvarts, *Novgorodskie rukopisi XV veka: kodikologicheskoe issledovanie rukopisei Sofiisko-Novgorodskogo sobraniia Gosudarstvennoi publichnoi biblioteki im. M.E. Saltykova-Shchedrina* (Moscow: Institut istorii AN SSSR, 1989), 19–28.

²⁷ Antipov, *Novgorodskaiia arkhitektura vremeni arkhiepiskopov Evfimiia II i Iony Otenskogo*.

²⁸ I. Antipov and D. Yakovlev, 'The Faceted Palace in Novgorod the Great as the part of the Archbishop's residence', in *Castella Maris Baltici*, ed. A. Andrzejewski, vol. XII. Castle as a Residence (Lodz: Institute of Archaeology, University of Lodz, 2015), 107–15; Gordienko, *Vladychnaia palata novgorodskogo kremlia*.

Evfimii invited 'German' (i.e. foreign) architects for this project, who created the only known brick Gothic building in Rus with the so-called One-pillar Hall: the single pillar of the hall holds a complex structure of pointed arches. A year later a clock tower was built in the yard.²⁹ In the light of this initiative, it is striking that the Novgorod Chronicles, which record the building, renovation or rebuilding of nearly two dozen churches commissioned from the end of the 1430s, frequently emphasize that the reconstruction was 'on old foundations'.³⁰ The first church renovation 'on old foundations' was initiated by two Novgorodian aristocrats in 1434 and this pattern was followed by the later church renovations which were commissioned partly by the archbishop himself, partly by merchants, *posadniks*, and the boyars of the city.³¹ For both Raba and Bobrov, these renovations signified a change in Evfimii's policy. Bobrov has highlighted two projects: the rebuilding of the church of Saint Boris and Gleb, the young sons of Vladimir the Great who were the first saints canonized in Kyivan Rus and the construction of the stone church of St Anastasia which replaced the former wooden structure in 1439.³² St Anastasia the Older was a martyr at the turn of the fourth century who resided in the monastery of Saint Sophia in Rome. Bobrov argues that the sophiological aspect of the saint's life was the main motive behind Evfimii's decision to construct a church dedicated to St Anastasia on the north-east side of the Sophia Cathedral. The next chapter will provide further evidence in support of this claim.

Bobrov's hypothesis about the correlation between Evfimii's architectural projects and the Union of Florence has been challenged by Ilya Antipov.³³ In his analysis of church constructions in Evfimii's time and subsequently, he emphasized that the new churches were built on the sites of the old ones. They frequently followed not contemporary patterns (single apse with slanted roofs), but the ancient Novgorodian forms of the mostly twelfth- and thirteenth-century prototypes with three apses and arched gables. Not finding sufficient evidence for a systematic programme of church renovations Antipov maintained that simple practical reasons drove Evfimii's projects: the old buildings required renovations and the old forms were automatically followed during the constructions. He drew analogies between the Evfimian church restorations and the renovations of old icons. Nonetheless, Antipov's argument would be more convincing if it was supported by examples not from icon-painting, but from the history of architecture of Rus. The lack of similar retrospective instances suggests, however, that this

²⁹ Raba, 'Archiepiscopal Authority', 352. Cf. PSRL, vol. IV/II/2 1925, 439.

³⁰ Antipov, *Novgorodskaiia arkhitektura vremeni arkhiepiskopov Evfimiia II i Iony Otenskogo*, 75–98.

³¹ Raba, 'Archiepiscopal Authority', 355–6; J. Raba, 'Novgorod in the Fifteenth Century: A Re-Examination', *Canadian Slavic Studies* 1, no. 3 (1967): 352.

³² Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 206–12.

³³ I. V. Antipov, 'Tserkvi Sv. Anastasii v Novgorode XV–XVI vv. i khramy Sofiiskogo buevishcha', *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 4 (2011): 172–82; Antipov, *Novgorodskaiia arkhitektura vremeni arkhiepiskopov Evfimiia II i Iony Otenskogo*, 91–6.

renovation project was a unique initiative of Evfimii and, therefore, undermines Antipov's critical reasoning. Furthermore, *innovative historicism* was the main feature of Evfimii's patronage which included not only architecture but also literature, liturgy, applied arts, and, as we shall see, painting: a reinterpretation of the past to construct an image of Orthodoxy for the present. In this aspect, Evfimii was a precursor of the great sixteenth-century Archbishop of Novgorod, Makarii, subsequently Metropolitan of Moscow.³⁴

Moreover, contemporaneous historical sources explicitly attributed great importance to the Evfimian project of church renovations. Firstly, the emphasis on 'the old foundation' is not a simple technical-architectural reference. In the Bible, the construction of the church is perceived as a symbolical act whereby the cornerstone of the church building (identified with the Church) is Christ, who with the apostles and the prophets constitute its foundation (cf. Letter to the Ephesians 2:19–22). Accordingly, the stress on 'the old foundations' in the chronicles is a metaphorical declaration of retaining the old faith of Novgorod. Secondly, in his *Life of Evfimii*, Pachomius the Serb glorifies Evfimii's initiative in the field of architecture by a powerful image of the personified Novgorodian churches.³⁵ All those churches, which were either renovated or newly constructed 'like stars' surround the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, the 'city of the great King' (Ps 47:3) and 'the mother and empress', to express their gratitude for Archbishop Evfimii: 'they cried out not with voice, but with objects and showed their beauty in different ways'. John Chrysostom, in the name of his church, said: 'since you constructed church on earth, I beseech the Creator to give you church in the heavens'. As a response to these churches, Evfimii quoted the psalm: 'O Lord, I love the beauty of your house' (Ps 25:8).³⁶ Pachomius's text provides clear evidence that Evfimii had a conscious programme of church construction. The main characteristics of this programme took their shape at the end of 1430s, that is around the time of the Union of Florence and they can be distinguished from those of Evfimii's patronage during his first period of office.

The next question is how the Union of Florence could have influenced Evfimii's ecclesiological and political orientation, most importantly in terms of Novgorod's relationship with Moscow and Lithuania. The problem of the direct and immediate impact of Isidore's activity in Rus and Novgorod, a highly hypothetical issue due to the lack of sufficient information, is beyond the scope of this study.³⁷ Here

³⁴ Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 68–9; Bernadskii, *Novgorod i Novgorodskaia zemlia v XV veke*, 243.

³⁵ *Povest' o Evfimie, arkhiepiskope Novgorodskom*. G. A. Kushelev-Bezborodko, *Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatury*, vol. IV. *Povesti religioznogo sodержaniia, drevnie poucheniia i poslaniia, izvlechenyie iz rukopisei Nikolaem Kostomarovym* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Kulisha, 1862), 16–26.

³⁶ Kushelev-Bezborodko, *IV*: 19–20.

³⁷ Cf. Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 97–100, 137–44; Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 194–216.

this question will be discussed from a broader perspective, by highlighting an aspect which has usually been neglected in historical studies.

According to a generally held view, Evfimii was 'a strong opponent of Moscow' who 'became the main ideologue of anti-Muscovite sentiments'.³⁸ Apart from the aforementioned cultural ties with the West which suggest close connections with Lithuania and the Hanseatic cities in Livonia (at least, in the first period of his office), this statement is mainly based on the fact that Evfimii, after his 1429 election in Novgorod, was not consecrated by Metropolitan Fotii (1410–31) in Moscow. Evfimii officially became the archbishop of Novgorod only six years after his election and not in Moscow but in Smolensk, in Lithuanian territory. Importantly, however, due to internal conflicts, there was no metropolitan in Moscow at that time, whilst the Lithuanian candidate, Gerasim officially held the title of Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus.³⁹ For this latter reason, therefore, this consecration was not necessarily an anti-Moscow act. Yet this event clearly signifies that Novgorod had an alternative anti-Muscovite ecclesiastical alliance in Lithuania in the mid-fifteenth century.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, this alliance implied the possibility of a future union with Rome. Gerasim's supporter was the Catholic Švitrigaila (†1452) who held intensive discussions with the pope about the union of the Churches. On this basis, Boris Ouspensky has argued that the highly unusual election of Gerasim in Constantinople was, in fact, motivated by Greek unionist plans.⁴¹

For Novgorod, forced to balance between Lithuania and Moscow, the Union of Florence created a fundamentally new situation. The 1441 letter of Vasilii II, in which the Moscow grand prince rejected the union in the name of the Russian bishops, signified the beginning of the process of independence for the Russian Church. In 1448, the council of the Russian hierarchs elected a new metropolitan, Iona, who formerly had been the Moscow candidate against Gerasim and Isidore in the 1430s.⁴² What was particularly significant from Novgorod's perspective is that the Russian anti-unionist discourse was led by the Moscow grand prince. In his letters, Vasilii II presented himself as the 'tsar of Rus lands'. Emulating the Byzantine emperors, who regarded themselves the defenders of the faith, Vasilii also initiated both the 1441 and 1448 councils.⁴³ As we have seen, he tactfully utilized the Byzantine ecclesiological and political formulas and ideas against the

³⁸ V. I. Ianin, 'Medieval Novgorod', in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, ed. M. Perrie, vol. I. From Early Rus' to 1689 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 209.

³⁹ For Evfimii's election and consecration (with further bibliography and historiographical survey): Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 226–9; B. A. Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh: kharizma vlasti v Rossii* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1998), 413–15.

⁴⁰ Cf. Raba, 'Church and Foreign Policy'; Raba, 'Novgorod in the Fifteenth Century'.

⁴¹ Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 418–28.

⁴² For the election of Iona (with further bibliography): Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 145–203; Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 211–59.

⁴³ See the previous chapter. Cf. Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 213–18.

Byzantines themselves. Vasiliï's initiative in separating the Rus Church from the jurisdiction of Constantinople, however, severely damaged not only Greek interests but also those of Lithuania in the territory of which the Western part of the Rus Metropolitanate located. A logical consequence of this policy was the appointment and consecration of a rival Metropolitan of Kyiv, Gregory Bulgarian II (1458–74) in Rome, and his recognition in Constantinople at the turn of 1465 and 1466. His jurisdiction included the Lithuanian part of the Rus Metropolitanate (under the rule of the Polish king, Casimir IV/1440–92/). Gregory II's appointment in 1458 meant the division of the 'Metropolitanate of Kyiv and all Rus' into the Moscow and Kyiv Metropolitanates and the beginning of a long-standing rivalry between these two seats.⁴⁴ Kyiv remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople which maintained its union with Rome until 1484, when Constantinople repudiated the ecclesiastical union, signed in Florence.⁴⁵

Simultaneously, the Russian reaction to the Union of Florence had a similar wide-reaching impact on Novgorod. One cannot overlook the significance of the fact that in Vasiliï's narrative, the territory of the Rus Church and his 'Rus land' coincided.⁴⁶ Vasiliï's letters demonstrate that here, unlike in Moscow, the rejection of the Union had negative rather than positive political consequences. Novgorod's participation in Vasiliï's anti-Constantinople ecclesiastical initiative significantly restricted the city's room for manoeuvre in foreign policy and necessarily led to an awareness of the significance and influence of Moscow. Consequently, after 1439 the political-economical and ecclesiastical interests of the city diverged. Although Evfimii did not participate in the 1441 and 1448 councils (which cannot be explained solely by the distance between Novgorod and Moscow), he supported the election of Iona in 1448.⁴⁷ Whilst he assisted the anti-unionist policy of Vasiliï II, Evfimii simultaneously attempted to distance himself from Moscow, with which Novgorod was at war in 1440–1. In the late 1440s, Novgorod provided a refuge for the Moscow rival of Vasiliï II, Dmitrii Shemiaka, which caused conflict between Evfimii and Metropolitan Iona.⁴⁸ Yet Novgorod remained under the jurisdiction of the *de facto* independent Metropolitanate of Moscow. Undoubtedly,

⁴⁴ A. Pliguzov, 'On the Title "Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Rus"', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 15 (1991): 340–53. For a history of this split with historiographical outline and further bibliography: B. Lourié, 'The Idea of Muscovite Autocephaly from 1441 to 1467', in *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. F. Ardelean, Ch. Nicholson, and J. Preiser-Kapeller (Frankfurt am Main, New York, and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 121–8; Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 252–73; Floria, *Issledovaniia po istorii Tserkvi*, 233–434; B. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge, Mass: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1998), 43–104.

⁴⁵ B. Gudziak, 'The Union of Florence in the Kievan Metropolitanate: Did It Survive until the Times of the Union of Brest? (Some Reflections on a Recent Argument)', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 17, no. 1/2 (1993): 138–48; S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 227–8.

⁴⁶ This coincidence was formulated even more explicitly in Metropolitan Iona's letters. Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 225. See also: Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 184–5.

⁴⁷ See Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 216–18.

⁴⁸ Abelentseva, *Mitropolit Iona*, 196–8, 229–33.

this was Evfimii's most important decision as a hierarch of Novgorod. Thus, in contrast with the historical wisdom about Evfimii's anti-Muscovite stance, in fact, during Evfimii's period of office, a new ecclesiastical bond was established between Moscow and Novgorod.

After 1439, the main supporters of Moscow's anti-unionist striving for independence were the archbishops themselves in Novgorod. Evfimii's successor was Archbishop Iona (1458–70) who continued the patronage of his predecessor, which he combined with an explicitly pro-Muscovite tenet.⁴⁹ Most tellingly, he introduced the cult of St Sergii of Radonezh into Novgorod, whose name was inseparably intertwined with the most glorious event in Muscovite history, the battle of Kulikovo (1380) in which Moscow defeated the Golden Horde. During the time of the subsequent archbishop, Feofil (1470–80), Novgorod lost its independence. In 1478, after Ivan III (1462–1505) had captured the city and disbanded the veche, Novgorod became part of the Grand Duchy of Moscow.

Unsurprisingly the pro-Muscovite policy of the Novgorod archbishops did not meet with the agreement of the city's secular leaders. In 1470, after the death of Archbishop Iona, the veche of Novgorod made a decision that the elected Novgorod archbishop must be consecrated not in Moscow but in Kyiv, by the unionist metropolitan, Gregory II.⁵⁰ They wrote a letter to Casimir IV, asking him 'not to take their Greek Orthodox faith', but to allow them to choose their archbishop independently.⁵¹ The veche's attempt to change Novgorod's jurisdiction was never realized, as one of the consequences of Novgorod's lost battle on the Shelon River against Ivan III in 1471. Nevertheless, this instance clearly shows that the Union of Florence presented the Novgorodians with an extremely difficult dilemma regarding their ecclesiastical status. It seems to me that primarily it was this dilemma which motivated the patronage of the Novgorod archbishops after 1439 and stimulated the flourishing of Novgorod art in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁵² There is very good reason to believe that the same dilemma prompted the appearance of a series of new and powerful ecclesiological iconographies in the second half of fifteenth century in Novgorod, which, following the example of *Pokrov* (Fig. 9.19), linked Orthodoxy explicitly with Novgorod: the *Battle between Novgorod and Suzdal* (Fig. 11.1), the Novgorod version of the *Exultation of cross*, the iconography of 'In thee rejoiceth' (Fig. 11.2) and, most importantly, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.⁵³

⁴⁹ M. V. Pechnikov, I. V. Antipov, and M. A. Makhan'ko, 'Iona', in *PE*, vol. XXV, 2011, 408–19.

⁵⁰ Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 240, 301; V. L. Ianin, *Novgorodskie akty XII–XV vv.: khronologicheskii kommentarii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 187–9.

⁵¹ AAE, I, 64. Cf. Uspenskii, *Tsar i patriarkh*, 301–2.

⁵² Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 89.

⁵³ For the *Pokrov* iconography see the previous chapter. For the Novgorodian *Exultation of cross* which appeared at the end of the fifteenth century: Shalina, 'Ikonoграфия Vozdvizheniia kresta v novgorodskom iskusstve'; Sarab'ianov, 'Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony', 175. For the Novgorod bilateral tablets with ecclesiological themes: Evseeva, *Analoimye ikony v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, 99–323.



Fig. 11.2. 'In thee rejoiceth', double-sided icon-tablet from the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, end of the fifteenth century.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

Evfimii's Icons

Whilst until the fourteenth century, sacred images in Novgorod identified Christianity with Byzantine Orthodoxy, fifteenth-century icons use recognizably familiar architectural settings, depictions of local saints, and liturgical practices to associate Orthodoxy with Novgorod. Likewise, this identification appears in the

vision of the personified Novgorodian churches in the Pachomian *Life of Evfimii* which was intended to glorify and interpret the archbishop's patronage. The image of the Sophia Cathedral, surrounded by the local churches of the saints, recalls the *Deesis* structure of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon where Sophia is represented as 'a mother and empress'—that is, the Orthodox Church.

The same text also highlights the importance of the decoration of the Novgorodian churches and the creation of their icons. Unfortunately, we know very little about this aspect of Evfimii's patronage. Although the new and renovated churches obviously received new fresco decorations, only ornamental fragments have survived.⁵⁴ Except for precious metalworks (e.g. the famous panagiarion, discussed in Chapter 8, Figs 8.3–8.4) and textiles (see the aforementioned epitaphios), only five icons from the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral commissioned by Evfimii have survived (Fig. 11.3).⁵⁵

Until the 1960s, the *Deesis* tier of the main iconostasis in the Novgorod Sophia cathedral was dated to 1509 on the basis of the *Fourth Novgorod Chronicle* which recorded its construction.⁵⁶ This dating changed significantly when it was clarified that the central five icons of the tier—representing Christ, the Mother of God, John the Baptist, Archangels Gabriel and Michael—are older than the others. During the subsequent renovation, an inscription was found in Gabriel's icon: 'In the year ... 46, these icons were depicted by the commission of his holiness Evfimii, Archbishop of Novgorod and the icon was painted by the sinful servant of God, monk Aaron F[eof]janov.' The digits of the inscription were read by Filatov and Mneva as 6947/1439, but Smirnova has argued that the correct reading of the year is 6946/1438.⁵⁷

These scholars consider that the icon-painter Aaron is the same as the Aaron who had a vision in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral in 1439, or according to some other sources, in 1438. Apart from the virtually identical dating, there are three supporting arguments. Firstly, the legend states that Aaron spent the night in the

⁵⁴ T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, 'O novgorodskoi stenopisi vremeni arkhiepiskopa Evfimiia II', *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 3 (2008): 61–75.

⁵⁵ For the metalworks commissioned by Evfimii: I. A. Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda: khudozhestvennyi metall XVI–XVII vekov* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 96–102. For the Panagiarion of Evfimii, see Chapter 8. For the textiles: Petrov, 'Puchezhskaiia Plashchanitsa 1441 goda'.

⁵⁶ For the five *Deesis* icons of the Novgorod Cathedral and their painter, Aaron: Tsarevskaia, *Velikii Novgorod. Uspenskii (Bol'shoi) ikonostas Sofiiskogo sobora*, 8–9; E. S. Smirnova, 'Deisusnyi chin', in *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, ed. L. V. Nersesian (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 258–62; I. A. Kochetkov, *Slovar' russkikh ikonopistsev XI–XVII vekov* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 25; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 208–9; E. S. Smirnova, 'Ikony 1438 g. v Sofiiskom sobore v Novgorode', *Pamiatniki kul'tury: novye otkrytiia. 1977, 1977, 215–24*; V. V. Filatov, 'Ikonostas novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Khudozhestvennaia kul'tura Novgoroda, tom 3*, ed. V. N. Lazarev, O. I. Podobedova, and V. V. Kostochkin (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 63–82; V. V. Filatov, 'Kto takoi inok Aaron?', *Nauka i religiiia*, no. 9 (1965): 67–70.

⁵⁷ Smirnova, 'Ikony 1438 g. v Sofiiskom sobore v Novgorode', 216; Filatov, 'Ikonostas novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora', 66.



Fig. 11.3. Aaron, Son of Feofan: the *Deesis* tier of the main iconostasis of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (icons of the Saviour, the Mother of God, John the Baptist, Archangels Michael and Gabriel), 1438 or 1439.

church with his fellows: this might have been a workshop (artel) working on a larger project in the Novgorod Sophia under the leadership of Aaron. Secondly and most importantly, the existence of this unique inscription in an icon of the iconostasis suggests that Aaron Feofanov and his work were especially important to the archbishop. Finally, the protagonists of both the inscription and the vision are Aaron, the painter, and Evfimii, the patron. Accordingly, there is a strong indication that the commission of the *Deesis* tier in the Novgorod Sophia might have been related to the problem of the ecclesiastical union.

There is no evidence about the existence of a *Deesis* tier at the Sophia Cathedral before 1438.⁵⁸ This new monumental *Deesis* tier, however, undoubtedly was inspired by the novel Russian high iconostases which Evfimii might have seen in Muscovy during his journey in 1437. Furthermore, this large-scale *Deesis* conveyed a strong intertwined eschatological-ecclesiological message: the five icons constitute an image of the Church with Christ-Bridegroom in the centre. He is seated on the heavenly throne, the symbol of the altar and of Wisdom's house, with the words of the Gospel of Matthew in his left hand: 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matt 25:34).

Unwittingly, the question emerges about a possible link between the commissioning of the new *Deesis* tier of the Sophia cathedral and the invention of the Sophia iconography which, as we have seen, is a transformed *Deesis*. The discoveries and restorations of the last years shed a new light on this question. In 2006 and 2007, Vladimir Sarabianov led a restoration in the Archiepiscopal Palace to explore its earliest frescoes.⁵⁹ In the so-called Cell of Bishop of John, under a nineteenth-century mural he found an older fresco of Sophia which, as a hypothesis, he dated to the fifteenth century and linked to Archbishop Evfimii II (Cat. 2; Figs 0.3 and 11.4). The untimely death of the scholar, however, prevented him from confirming his suggestion, which raised some doubts. In the fresco, the usual three-figure *Deesis* composition of the Sophia iconography is flanked by two hierarchs, one of whom has been identified with Nikita, bishop of Novgorod (1096–1108). Bishop Nikita, however, was canonized only in the sixteenth century and there is no known representation of this prelate from the previous century.⁶⁰ In 2019, however, Tatiana Tsarevskaya published two articles in which she confirmed the early dating of the Sophia fresco, by linking it to the information of the *Novgorod First Chronicle* which records the mural decoration of the

⁵⁸ Nevertheless, there is some indirect evidence of the existence of *Deesis* tiers on Novgorod iconostases at that time. Among these, the portable embroidered *Deesis* tier, which art historians link with Evfimii, is especially significant. A. S. Petrov, 'Drevnerusskie shitye peleny pod ikony. XV–XVI vv. Tipologiya, funktsiya, ikonografiya' (Doctoral dissertation, Moscow, Lomonosov Moscow State University, 2008), 232–3; Smirnova, 'Ikony 1438 g. v Sofiiskom sobore v Novgorode', 218.

⁵⁹ V. D. Sarab'ianov, 'Rospisi Vladychnoi palaty Novgorodskogo Kremli: Kel'ia Ioanna', *Novgorod i novgorodskaya zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiya* 3 (2009): 119–39.

⁶⁰ Sarab'ianov, 130–3.



Fig. 11.4. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, flanked by two Novgorod hierarchs, fresco in the Cell of Archbishop John, Archiepiscopal Palace, Novgorod, 1441.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

Archiepiscopal Palace in 1441.⁶¹ She argues that the flanking saint bishops were added to the Sophia composition nearly one hundred years later, as a part of a larger decoration project of the palace (including the Cell of John) commissioned by Archbishop Makarii (see also the Catalogue in the Appendix).⁶²

If this assessment is correct, we have a highly important date, 1441, in the history of the creation of the Sophia iconography: two years after the signing of the decree of union in Florence, the Sophia image was already present in Novgorod. Significantly, the iconography of the fresco supports this stance, as unlike other Sophia images, the position of John the Baptist follows a traditional *Deesis* gesture with a raised open right palm.⁶³ On the one hand, this reinforces the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography's genesis from *Deesis*, and on the other indicates that the fresco in the Archiepiscopal Palace shows an early stage of the development of the iconography. From this perspective, there is certainly a relationship between Aaron's *Deesis* icons from 1438 or 1439 and the invention of the Sophia iconography. In both the fresco and Aaron's *Deesis*, John the Baptist is represented in his camel's hair tunic as a man of the wilderness which was a relative new phenomenon in Russian art. The earliest extant Russian *Deesis* with John as an ascetic is in the icon of the iconostasis of the Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir from 1410s,

⁶¹ Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant'; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye osnovy'.

⁶² Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant', 152.

⁶³ Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye osnovy', 476; Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant', 158.

earlier attributed to the workshop of Andrei Rublev.⁶⁴ The open palm of John's right hand, however, links Aaron's icons with the *Deesis* of the high iconostasis in the Trinity church of the Trinity—St Sergii Monastery, painted in 1425–7.⁶⁵

Simultaneously, 2019 also saw the exhibition of the freshly restored Sophia icon from the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral which, on stylistic grounds, has been considered to be the earliest icon of Sophia since the publications of Lev Lifshits (Cat. 1; Fig. 0.4).⁶⁶ This is a bilateral icon with a nineteenth-century Crucifixion representation on its verso which might follow an original iconography, although the medieval painting beneath the present one has not survived. The restoration has confirmed both the icon's dating to the first half of the fifteenth century and the observation that it cannot be a work of a Novgorod painter, but rather that of a master from around Moscow or Tver.

As discussed in the Introduction, there have been different theories to resolve the contradiction that the earliest *Novgorod Sophia* icon was apparently painted not by a Novgorod icon-painter.⁶⁷ There are two common elements of these theories. Firstly, they ignore the fact that the Sophia iconography remained unknown outside the Novgorod Archbishopric until the middle of the sixteenth century—at least we have no evidence whatsoever of its reflection in the art of other regions by this period. This suggests that the Wisdom iconography remained a purely Novgorodian peculiarity until the reign of Tsar Ivan IV. Secondly, these theories operate with the assumption that only Novgorod-trained icon-painters were active in Novgorod and non-Novgorod icon-painters were not commissioned there. Nevertheless, not only does historical evidence contradict this presupposition, but so does the iconographic analysis of the Kremlin Sophia icon.

As Tsarevskaya has observed, both the fresco in the Cell of Bishop John and the Kremlin icon are closer to the traditional *Deesis* formula than the majority of later Wisdom images.⁶⁸ Despite this correspondence, however, John's figure is substantially different in the two images. The fresco depicts John standing half-turned towards Sophia, but gazing at the viewer, with his right hand in a usual *Deesis* position of supplication. In contrast, the Kremlin icon shows him with an elevated blessing right hand, turning with both his body and face to Sophia. His fingers are

⁶⁴ Nersesyan et al., *Holy Russia*, 465; Durand, Giovannoni, and Rapti, *Sainte Russie*, 368–9; E. Ia. Ostashenko, *Andrei Rublev: paleologovskie traditsii v moskovskoi zhivopisi kontsa XIV—pervoi treti XV veka* (Moscow: Indrik, 2005), 253–4; I. A. Kochetkov, 'Russkii polnofigurnyi deisusnyi chin: Genealogiia ikonograficheskikh tipov', in *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhdenie-razvitie-simvolika*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000), 446.

⁶⁵ Kochetkov, 'Russkii polnofigurnyi deisusnyi chin', 448; Smirnova, Laurina, and Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 209.

⁶⁶ L. A. Shchennikova and L. V. Gushchina, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhiia. Raspiatie', in *Khraniteli Vremeni: Restavratsiia v Muzeiakh Moskovskogo Kremli*, ed. I. A. Maslennikova (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoriko-kulturnyi muzei-zapovednik 'Moskovskii Kreml', 2019), 190–7.

⁶⁷ See the Introduction.

⁶⁸ Tsarevskaya, 'Rannii Variant', 158–9; Tsarevskaya, 'Programmnye osnovy', 475–6.

represented in the so-called Christogram blessing position: the thumb and the ring finger are joined together, while the extended index finger is joined to the middle finger, slightly bent.⁶⁹ This hand gesture was appropriated from Byzantine representations of John the Baptist, and, as discussed in Chapter 2 analysing the Sophia commentary, it has a subtle liturgical reference to the Epiclesis, when the bishop blesses with his right hand the consecrated Gifts of the Eucharist.⁷⁰ An early Balkan example of this type of Byzantine representation of John is in the late twelfth-century sanctuary decoration of the St Panteleimon church in Nerezi, where the blessing John appears over the holy deacons with censers in their hands (Fig. 2.1).⁷¹ The blessing gesture of John will be a distinguishing feature of a series of Sophia images, but in two small-scale mid-sixteenth-century icons from the Novgorod region the iconography of the Kremlin icon it is closely copied.

The first image is from the Likhachev collection of the State Russian Museum in St Petersburg: it has a possessor's inscription which indicates that the icon was apparently painted by a Novgorod painter for Agafan Druzhinin from the city of Kem on the distant shores of the White Sea (Cat. 9; Fig. 11.5). The other icon is in the right panel of the carved wood Triptych from the private collection of A. Rastorguev which, on iconographic grounds, has been located to the Archbishopric of Novgorod (Cat. 10; Fig. 11.6).⁷² Both images show very close resemblance to the iconography of the Kremlin Sophia image, including not only the figure of John but also other details: the representation of the Mother of God, Sophia and her wings, respectively, as well as the arrangement of the six adoring angels over the segment of heaven indicate a clear affinity with the early Sophia icon. The differences in the rendering of the aureoles of Christ, both in the hand of the Virgin and over the head of Sophia and the missing instruments of the Passion from the sixteenth-century icons, can be easily explained by the different

⁶⁹ The name of this hand gesture—*imenoslovnoe* of Christogram blessing—comes from its interpretation, known from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentaries: the blessing fingers form the letters of Christ's monogram, IC XC. For this blessing see B. A. Uspenskii, *Krestnoe znamenie i sakral'noe prostranstvo: pochemu pravoslavnye krestiansia sprava nalevo, a katoliki—sleva napravo?* (Moscow: Iazyk, semiotika, kul'tura, 2004), 108–11. Uspenskii argues that this type of blessing is a late derivation of the so-called two-finger blessing (when the little finger also joins the thumb). Iconographic evidence, however, suggests that Christogram blessing was common already in the Middle Ages in both Rus and Byzantium.

⁷⁰ For the iconography of John the Baptist in Byzantium: K. Wessel, 'Himmlische Liturgie', in *RBK*, vol. III, 1978, 616–31. A liturgical meaning to the gesture of John in the Kremlin bilateral icon was attributed by A. I. Iakovleva, "'Obraz mira" v ikone "Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia", in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Problemy i atributsii*, ed. O. I. Podobedova and V. N. Lazarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 394–5.

⁷¹ For John the Baptist in the Nerezi diakonikon (south-eastern apsed chamber): Sinkevič, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 45–6. As Sinkevič observes, the figure of John in the diakonikon forms a *Deesis* with the Virgin *Orans* represented in the conch of the opposite, northern chamber of the sanctuary (prothesis) and Christ in the central dome (which has not survived).

⁷² The left panel of this triptych shows the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* with the Mother of God in the centre which is an innovation known only in Northwest Russia and primarily in Pskov in this period. N. I. Komashko, ed., *Shest' vekov russkoi ikony. Noveye otkrytiia: Katalog vystavki iz chastnykh sobranii k 60-letiiu Muzeia imeni Andriia Rubleva* (Moscow: Indrik, 2007), 206. In this carved Wisdom image, John blesses with two fingers, that is, his little and ring fingers are joined to the thumb.



Fig. 11.5. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from Kem (Karelia), 1550s–1560s. GRM, Collection of N. Likhachev.

Credit: State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

measurements of the images. This similarity, which is especially striking between the Kremlin and the St Petersburg icons, strongly suggests that the double-sided icon was in Novgorod in the first half of the sixteenth century and thus available for the Novgorod painters to imitate. It is highly plausible, therefore, that the icon was transferred to Moscow by Metropolitan Makarii (1542–63), the former Archbishop of Novgorod, or during the plunder of Novgorod by Ivan IV in 1570.⁷³

⁷³ This hypothesis was formulated also by L. Shchennikova: L. A. Shchennikova, I. A. Sterligova, and Iu. N. Zvezdina, eds., *Tsarskii Khram: Sviatymi Blagoveshchenskogo sobora v Kremle* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom Maksima Svetlanova, 2003), 116; I. Ia. Kachalova, N. A. Maiasova, and



Fig. 11.6. *Descent of the Holy Spirit, Old Testament Trinity and Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, carved wood triptych, mid-sixteenth century.

Credit: A. Rastorguev.

Consequently, despite its stylistic characteristics, there is every reason to assume that the Sophia icon of the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral was created either in Novgorod or, at least, for a Novgorod commissioner.

Given the current dating of the icon, which suggests that it is the earliest extant *Novgorod Sophia* icon, we might also believe that the commissioner of this icon was Archbishop Evfimii II, or somebody from his close circle. The fact that—despite the existence of the extremely influential and prominent local icon of the Sophia Cathedral—the icon was copied in the sixteenth century indicates the high prestige of this smaller icon and might imply that it was also kept in the Sophia Cathedral. Given that this is a bilateral icon with an image of the Crucifixion on its verso, it might have had a special role in the liturgical life of the cathedral and possibly it was also used in processions.⁷⁴ This suggestion might be supported by the proposed shared link of the Kremlin icon and the Archiepiscopal Palace's Sophia fresco to the Crucifixion iconography. As Tsarevskaya hypothesized, the Wisdom mural in the Cell of Bishop John was paired with a representation of the Crucifixion.⁷⁵

The earliest known example of a Russian *Deesis* with the blessing figure of John the Baptist is a panel of an iconostasis from Uglich from the third quarter of the fifteenth century. However, this icon probably imitates John's similar gesture in the icon from the aforementioned *Deesis* tier of the Vladimir Cathedral created in

L. A. Shchennikova, eds., *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990), 67. See also: Makhan'ko, *Pochitanie i sobiranie drevnikh ikon v istorii i kul'ture Moskovskoi Rusi XVI veka*, 58–71. For Makarii's relationship to the Sophia iconography, see Chapter 12.

⁷⁴ A new study on bilateral icons can provide further interpretative possibilities for the Kremlin Sophia icon: J. A. Rodriguez, 'Images for Personal Devotion in an Age of Liturgical Synthesis: Bilateral Icons in Byzantium, ca. 1100–1453' (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 2018).

⁷⁵ Tsarevskaya, 'Programmye osnovy', 151–61; Tsarevskaya, 'Rannii Variant', 478. Another combination of the Sophia and Crucifixion iconographies appear in the sixteenth-century Triptych from Moscow (GTG, Cat. 22) where the closed wings show the Crucifixion. See also the Catalogue.

the 1410s which was repainted later.⁷⁶ This proposes that there were different attempts for the transformation of the Deesis formula in Novgorod in inventing the new Sophia iconography. Correspondingly, we might consider these two early Wisdom paintings as experimental images that preceded the creation of the large icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral. Another less likely option is, put forward by Vladimir Sarabianov, that first a large-scale local Sophia icon had been created for the cathedral, simultaneously with the installation of the *Deesis* tier of the iconostasis with Aaron's icons, serving as prototype for the two aforementioned images, but this icon has now lost.⁷⁷ Due to the lack of evidence and the divergencies of the two early extant Sophia paintings, it is impossible to confirm this hypothesis. Nevertheless, there is hardly any doubt that both images—the fresco in the Archiepiscopal Palace and the icon which deploys a comparable iconography—were directly connected with the Sophia Cathedral and its archpriest, Evfimii II.

The appearance of the large Sophia icon in the Cathedral (Cat. 3, Fig. 0.1) fundamentally determined the history of the Sophia iconography: this new icon served as prototype for the overwhelming majority of the subsequent Wisdom images both in Novgorod and, after the mid-sixteenth century, outside of it. Undoubtedly, its most striking distinguishing feature, which contrasts it to all versions of *Deesis* images, as well as the aforementioned Wisdom paintings, is the right hand of John, meekly elevated to his chest: a visualization of the idea of 'humble wisdom' that 'reigns over the passions'. This gesture appears in some representations of holy monks and prophets. A relevant example or even a possible prototype of John's right hand in the Sophia icon is the twelfth-century fresco of King Solomon in the drum of the central dome in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (Fig. 11.7). In elevating his right hand to his chest, Solomon holds in his left a scroll with the verse Proverbs 9:1: 'Wisdom has built her house.'⁷⁸

Scholarly publications of the last four decades have dated this Sophia icon with much variance, ranging from the latter half of the fifteenth century to the seventeenth. In the recent years, the majority of art historians have connected it to Archbishop Gennadii (1484–1504), by assigning it, on stylistic grounds, to the end of the fifteenth century.⁷⁹ Since every dating based on purely formal analysis

⁷⁶ Kochetkov, 'Russkii polnognurnyi deisusnyi chin', 446–7. The blessing right hand of John in the icon of the Vladimir Dormition Cathedral is damaged, see Ostashenko, *Andrei Rublev*, 254; Kochetkov, 'Russkii polnognurnyi deisusnyi chin', 446. For the John the Baptist panel from Uglich: V. I. Antonova and N. E. Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi XI—nachala XVIII vekov: Opyt istoriko-khudozhestvennoi klassifikatsii*, vol. I (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963), 325–6, no. 270. ill. 213. I. Kochetkov interprets the gesture of John as oratorical, cf. Durand, Giovannoni, and Rapti, *Sainte Russie*, 368.

⁷⁷ Sarab'ianov, 'Rospisi Vladychnoi palaty', 128–30. See also Gordienko, 'Bol'shoi ikonostas Sofiiskogo sobora (po pis'mennym istochnikam)', 214.

⁷⁸ For the fresco from 1109 with illustration, see Lifshits, Sarab'ianov, and Tsarevskaia, *Monumental'naia Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda*, 289–92.

⁷⁹ T. Iu. Tsarevskaia, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia', in *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI—nachala XVI vekov*, ed. L. V. Nersesian (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2008), 345; Kvilidze, 'Ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei'. See also Cat. 3.



Fig. 11.7. King Solomon, fresco in the drum of the central dome, St Sophia Cathedral, 1109.

Photo: Anna Zakharova

must be consistent with historical and other external evidences, I provide here a series of points which might challenge this art-historical wisdom. These evidences seem to propose that the Sophia icon of the Novgorod Cathedral was also commissioned by Archbishop Evfimii II—if not in the first half of his office (as the two early images), then towards the end of it, in the 1450s.

The late-fifteenth-century dating of the Sophia icon of the Novgorod Cathedral raises a series of problems. Firstly, a most recent palaeographical analysis of the icon suggests that the inscription of John's scroll was created in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁸⁰ Secondly, there are two examples of the Sophia iconography from the end or the turn of the fifteenth century which freely imitate the iconography of the Sophia Cathedral with the humble gesture of John. Both the drawing of the Likhatchev Apostle (Cat. 4, Fig. 8.6) and the icon from the former Provatoroff collection (Cat. 5, Fig. 11.8), with their bold idiosyncratic solutions (the Mother of God in orans and the almond-shape aureole of Sophia flanked by seraphim in the drawing; the number and arrangement of angels in both images, etc.), reflect a long-standing acquaintance with the iconography of the cathedral's Sophia icon.

Thirdly, in 1510, the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle* records that the Grand Prince of Moscow ordered a candle perpetually to be burned in front of this icon

⁸⁰ Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant', 157, note 35.



Fig. 11.8. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from the former Provatoroff collection, end of the fifteenth century.

‘according to ancient custom’.⁸¹ It is very unlikely that the chronicle refers to an ‘ancient custom’ regarding a ca. twenty-years icon. This observation is supported by the fact that the slightly smaller icon did not perfectly fit into the new

⁸¹ PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 537.

iconostasis of the Sophia Cathedral, rebuilt and extended in 1509. As a result, in 1528 Archbishop Makarii ordered the ‘miraculous and holy’ Sophia icon to be placed higher within the local tier.⁸² Significantly, the current local icon of the Sophia Cathedral is smaller than other icons of the local tier (Fig. 9.9), therefore the 1510 and 1528 records of the chronicle undoubtedly relate to this icon.

The amassed evidence suggests an earlier dating for the Sophia icon in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral than the late fifteenth century. Of course, it cannot be fully excluded that the icon was commissioned by the Novgorod hierarchs who followed Evfimii: Iona (1458–1470) or Feofil (1470–1480). Nevertheless, this is not very likely. One must also consider that Evfimii remained the archbishop of Novgorod for two decades after the decree of union had been signed in Florence and the first Sophia images had been created. During these two decades a new Russian metropolitan, Iona was elected in a highly controversial way in 1448 and, most significantly, in 1453 Constantinople with its Hagia Sophia fell to the Ottoman Turks. After 1453 the idea of the succession from Constantinople to Novgorod was more relevant than ever, while the question of ecclesiastical union remained as pertinent as it was before. Certainly, in these circumstances it is difficult to imagine that Evfimii would have not wished to demonstrate the idea of Sophia in a more monumental, accessible and compelling way, than in the fresco in the Cell of Bishop John or in the relatively small bilateral icon. But if he commissioned a largescale Sophia icon for the cathedral which is now lost, as was suggested by Sarabianov, why then did the creation of a new icon become necessary a few decades later at the end of the fifteenth century? In my view, these apparent contradictions may be resolved by conceiving that the current local icon of the Sophia cathedral was also commissioned by Evfimii himself, accordingly, it directly reflects the inventors’ intentions and ideas. Since the icon has a—so far illegible—ten-line contemporaneous inscription with the text of the commentary, textual criticism can also add important information to this question of dating, considering that the opening line of the commentary changed in the 1470s (see Appendix).

To conclude, this chapter has put forward that the creation of the Sophia iconography and its commentary should be linked to Archbishop Evfimii, who apparently made an anti-unionist intellectual centre in Novgorod after 1439, or possibly even before it. The cultural patronage of Evfimii has shown that he turned toward the past of Novgorod in an innovative way at the end of the 1430s and this in-turn was driven by a hostile reaction to the Union of Florence. The creation of the Wisdom image organically fits into this endeavour. The historicism of the *Novgorod Sophia* is manifested, as discussed in the previous chapters, by its direct iconographic references to the ancient Novgorodian and Pskovian sanctuary decorations, as well as to the fourteenth-century Novgorodian iconographical types: the

⁸² PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 545.

image of Wisdom, the *Royal Deesis*, and the *Pokrov*. Yet it conveys a novel and relevant ecclesiological message in the context of the ecclesiastical union.

There is no reason to interpret the Sophia icon as an image of Novgorodian independence: after 1439, the idea of Novgorod's separatism and the anti-unionist controversy led by the Moscow grand prince conflicted. This iconography promotes not merely the greatness of Novgorod, but the Orthodoxy of Novgorod which is identified with Sophia. In the given historical context, Novgorod's Orthodoxy was the symbol of the true faith of Rus. The anti-Latin and anti-Constantinople agenda of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon was equally important not only to Novgorod but also to other principalities of Rus—and in many aspects to the whole Byzantine commonwealth, opposed to the union of churches. It is not coincidental, therefore, that numerous prominent people from all parts of Rus and the Balkans turned up in Novgorod in around 1439, such as Pachomius the Serbian or Simeon of Suzdal. There is good reason to propose that icon-painters were also amongst them, including, possibly, the creator of the bilateral Sophia icon.

The manuscript tradition of the Sophia commentary confirms this observation: it bears witnesses to the extremely swift dissemination of the text beyond Novgorod. Whilst the earliest Novosibirsk manuscript was probably written in the 1450s in Novgorod, the commentary was copied roughly in the same years in Moscow. Significantly, this manuscript (from the Chudov Monastery) was owned by the hegumen of the Moscow New St Saviour (Novospasskii) Monastery, German (1467–82) who donated it to the Pafnutiev Monastery in Borovsk. Another late fifteenth-century manuscript of the commentary was copied in the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery which was later owned by Metropolitan Zosima himself (1491–4).⁸³ There is every indication to believe that the diffusion of the commentary to Muscovy has to do with the movement of Pachomius from Novgorod to Moscow and the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery in the 1440s. The presence of Pachomius in Novgorod around 1439, the hypothetical time of the combined creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and its commentary, proposes his authorship of the commentary, although other scribes of Evfimii are also known, including Iakov the calligrapher or Iov the chronographer.⁸⁴ The next chapter will discuss the subsequent history of the commentary connected to the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery and here Pachomius the Serb will reappear. Importantly, however, it is only the text which disseminated outside Novgorod. Pachomius took only his manuscripts with him, while the Sophia iconography itself still remained unknown in other regions of Rus.⁸⁵

⁸³ See Appendix.

⁸⁴ For Iakov: A. A. Turilov, 'Master Iakovishko—maloizvestnyi novgorodskii knigopisets seredeny XV v.', in *Khrizograf: Sbornik statei k iubileiu G.Z. Bykovoï*, ed. E. N. Dobrynina (Moscow: SkanRus, 2003), 165–82. For Iov, the monk of the Khutyn Monastery: Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 71–4.

⁸⁵ The hypothesis that Pachomius transmitted the Sophia iconography to Moscow in the early 1440s was put forward by Tsarevskaja, 'Rannii variant', 167.

The Hagia Sophia in Rome

Monk Efrosin and the Third Redaction of the Sophia Commentary

Efrosin, the monk-scribe of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, is an outstanding figure in late fifteenth-century Russian literature. His manuscript miscellanies contain a series of unique pieces of Slavic and Rus literature.¹ Of particular note are the anti-Latin texts that are prominent in all of his manuscripts. Furthermore, found within his miscellanies are a systematic collection of texts that are connected with the Union of Florence which scholars label the *Florentine cycle*.²

Within one of the manuscripts of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery collection (KB 22/1099, Russian National Library, St Petersburg) is the Sophia commentary (ff. 220v–221r, Fig. 12.1).³ The codex itself is an extremely complex composite, created at different times by numerous scribes. However, the document can still be dated thanks to Pachomius the Serb, whose handwriting can be found on folios 274v–284v. Since Pachomius was a resident of the Kirillo-Belozersk monastery in 1462, his signature can be used as the basis for the dating of KB 99/1022.

The text of the Sophia commentary was written by Efrosin and inserted into the codex in the mid-1470s.⁴ Pachomius's autograph as a context of the Sophia commentary is significant as he worked under the patronage of Archbishop Evfimii II at the proposed time of the creation of the Sophia commentary in Novgorod. The question of whether this later copy reflects his editorial work, or

¹ The website of Efrosin's manuscripts (KB 11/1088; KB 22/1099; KB 53/1130; KB 6/1083; KB 9/1086): 'Euphrosynus Manuscripts—Fifteenth-Century Miscellanies', accessed 5 June 2020, <http://expositions.nlr.ru/EfrosinManuscripts/eng/project.php>. On Efrosin (or on the so-called *Efrosinology*, with further bibliography): M. A. Shibaev, *Rukopisi Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyria XV veka: istoriko-kodikologicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: Al'ians-Arkheo, 2013); S. N. Kisterev, *Labirinty Efrosina Belozerskogo* (Moscow: Al'ians-Arkheo, 2012); M. A. Shibaev, 'Efrosin', in *PE*, vol. XVII, 2008, 489–91; M. D. Kagan, N. V. Ponyrko, and M. V. Rozhdestvenskaia, 'Opisanie sbornikov XV v. knigopista Efrosina', *TODRL* 35 (1980): 3–241.

² Novikova, 'Formirovanie i rukopisnaia traditsiia "Florentiiskogo tsikla"', 20–6. See also Chapter 10.

³ This copy of the Sophia commentary was discovered by M. Pliukhanova: M. B. Pliukhanova, 'Stikhi o Sofee v Stishnom prologe iz Papskogo Vostochnogo Instituta v Rime', *Slověne* 4, no. 1 (2015): 385. For the manuscript KB 22/1099 (with further bibliography): O. L. Novikova, 'Kodikologicheskoe izuchenie sbornika Efrosina Kir.-Bel. 22/1099', *Vestnik 'Al'ians-Arkheo'* 16 (2016): 3–37. See also: 'Euphrosynus Manuscripts—Fifteenth-Century Miscellanies', accessed 5 June 2020, <http://expositions.nlr.ru/EfrosinManuscripts/eng/project.php>.

⁴ Novikova, 'Kodikologicheskoe izuchenie sbornika Efrosina Kir.-Bel. 22/1099', 17.

even suggests his authorship of the original text can be answered with a detailed philological analysis based upon a comparison of the commentary with the writings of Pachomius. The presence of other anti-Latin texts around the Sophia commentary in this manuscript, including the *Letter of the monks of Mount Athos to Grand Prince Vasilii II* against the Union of Florence (ff. 244–250, Efrosin's handwriting) is also significant.⁵

The Kirillo-Belozersk manuscript is a very old trace of the Sophia commentary, preceded only by the Novosibirsk manuscript, which was possibly written in Novgorod, and, supposedly, also by the Chudov manuscript. This version of the commentary is a new and unique third redaction, in which the satellite texts are missing and the commentary itself is also shorter. Section III is completely omitted from the text. This manuscript has many peculiarities, some of which are shared with the Novosibirsk manuscript. There is a new title of the text, unique to this version, with a false attribution: 'Sermon on Saint Sophia, Wisdom of God by John Chrysostom.' However, the most interesting element is a marginal note by Efrosin himself, providing a new introductory sentence to the commentary: 'Of the Church of God, Sophia, the most pure Virgin Mother of God, that is, virginal soul.'⁶

This phrase, which identifies Sophia with the Mother of God and the virginal soul, became integral parts of the Sophia commentary from the sixteenth century onwards and thus, as shown, defined the historiography of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.⁷ Scholars have been unable to find an explanation of why Sophia is the Mother of God here, since there is no trace of any explicit Marian interpretation of Wisdom in patristic literature. In the exegesis of Proverbs, the Theotokos is the temple of Wisdom and this is an issue that was already raised in the sixteenth century. An anonymous sixteenth-century text entitled *Certain sermon on what Sophia is*, challenges the contemporaneous identification of Wisdom with the Mother of God and maintains that Wisdom can only be Christ.⁸ This text contains

⁵ For the *Letter of the monks of Mount Athos to Grand Prince Vasilii II* see Turilov, 'K istorii drevnerusskoi rukopisnoi traditsii sochinenii, sviazannykh s Ferraro-Florentiiskoi uniei', 384.

⁶ KB 22/1099, f. 221v. 'Церкви Бѣга Софіа Пречиста Дѣа Бѣда, ѿи речъ дѣбственьхъ душа. Неизгла.' The last word of the marginal note (Неизгла) is the first word of the commentary.

⁷ See for example the sixteenth-century manuscript of the Moscow Theological Academy, MDA 16, f. 99r, which also contains a direct reference to Novgorod: 'On Sophia, the Wisdom of God, copied from the local image which is in Great Novgorod. The Church of God, Sophia, most pure Mother of God, that is virginal soul.' This manuscript is also mentioned by Pavel Florensky: Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, 280.

⁸ Editions of the text: Briusova, *Sofia Premudrost' Bozhiiia v drevnerusskoi literature i iskusstve*, 153–6, cf. 86–9; Nikol'skii, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhiiia', 92–100, cf. 71–2; Filimonov, 'Ocherki', 1874, sec. 1. See also E. A. Gordienko, *Novgorod v XVI veke i ego dukhovnaia zhizn'* (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2001), 325–6; Filimonov, 'Ocherki', 1874, 11–12; Ignatii (Semenov), 'Ob ikone Sv. Sofii v novgorodskom Sofiiskom sobore', 244–5. This polemical text is apparently in contrast with the sophiological discourse of the famous Russian theologian, Zinovii Otenskii's (1571/2?) *Encomium on Hypatius, bishop of Gangra*, written against the contemporaneous anti-Trinitarian heretics. On the basis of the anti-Arian argument of Athanasius of Alexandria, this text discusses the dual interpretation of Wisdom (the created one and the Creator). V. I. Koretskii, 'Vnov' naidennoe protivovereticheskoe

an addition (*Sermon on why the Dormition was added to the twelve Christological feasts*) where the author objects to Archbishop Gennadii (1484–1504) introducing the Dormition of the Theotokos as the dedication feast of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral to which the author objected.⁹

This brief marginal note from Efrosin raises fundamental questions which are at the heart of the scholarship of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon. This last chapter seeks to answer them by identifying the source and the meaning of Efrosin's words. Since the new dedication of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral to the Dormition does not have a merely theological message, but also a political one—it linked the main cathedrals of Moscow and Novgorod—this investigation sheds light on the process by which the local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral became the symbol of the autocephalous Russian Church: the Patriarchate of the Third Rome, Moscow (1589).¹⁰ Given the very early date of Efrosin's Sophia commentary (mid-1470s), this chapter also provides new information about the original message and function of the Sophia icon.

Sophia—'The Mother of God, that is, virginal soul'

There is consensus among scholars that the Mariological words in the Sophia commentary were written under the influence of Western theology where the identification of Sophia with the Virgin Mary, as we have seen, became a central concept by the fifteenth century and was organically intertwined with the Western idea of the Immaculate Conception.¹¹ Chapter 8, however, challenges the hypothesis that the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has anything to do with this concept. The philological analysis of Efrosin's marginal note leads to a similar conclusion.

proizvedenie Zinovia Otsenskogo', *TODRL* 21 (1965): 166–82. Correspondingly, Zinovii cannot be the author of the anonymous *Certain sermon*, although one of the manuscripts mentions him and many scholars attribute it to him. For Zinovii with bibliography: Archimandrite Makarii (Veretennikov), 'Zinovii', in *PE*, vol. XX, 2009, 149–54. Interestingly, the Slavonic translation of anti-Arian works of Athanasius of Alexandria disseminated in Rus by the initiative of Gennadii, Archbishop of Novgorod at the end of the fifteenth century. For Athanasius's anti-Arian sophiological theology, see Chapter 3.

⁹ Although the text itself mentions only that the Dormition became particularly important in the liturgical life of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, there are other (visual, textual, and liturgical) evidences which suggest that Gennadii introduced a new dedication feast of the church. Importantly, the local icon of the Cathedral, on the right of the Royal Doors, represents the Dormition (painted in 1655–6. Tsarevskaia, *Velikii Novgorod. Uspenskii (Bol'shoi) ikonostas Sofiiskogo sobora*, 15). Kvilidze, 'Novgorodskaia ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei', 87, 93–6; Pliukhanova, 'O traditsiakh sofiiskikh i uspenskikh tserkvei', 501–3; Florovskii, 'O pochitanii Sofii', 488–9.

¹⁰ The first official document which calls 'the Russian tsardom' the Third Rome is the declaration of the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate (1589). Sinityna, *Tretii Rim*, 299–305; D. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239.

¹¹ Pliukhanova, 'Stikhi o Sofee', 385–90; Zolotarev, 'Vopros'; Meyendorff, 'L'iconographie de la Sagesse Divine', 276–7; Florovskii, 'O pochitanii Sofii'. See also: Kvilidze, 'Ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei', 93–6.

Efrosin writes about the Church of God which suggests that there was an ecclesiological message in his words. Furthermore, his manuscripts contain all the important texts of the vast Slavonic anti-Latin literature. The first monograph on this polemical corpus was written by Andrei Popov in 1875 which provides with the editions of the most widespread writings.¹² One of the longest texts of this book is the *Epistle against the Romans*, published by Popov from a fifteenth-century manuscript in his own collection which has now lost.¹³ He mentions that the identical text is present in the miscellany of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery (KB 19/1096) which was partly written by Martinian (ca. 1400–83), the disciple of Kirill of Belozersk (1337–1427) himself. Rufina Dmitrieva noted that this text from KB 19/1096 was copied into one of Efrosin's manuscripts (KB 53/1130, ff. 494r–534v).¹⁴ Efrosin then used this text when writing his marginal note (509v).

The *Epistle against the Romans* is a unique compilation with several variants.¹⁵ The earliest short redaction of the text under the title *The tale about the twelve apostles, the Latins and the azymes* survived in late-fourteenth century manuscripts. Consequently, the text was disseminated in Rus well before the Council of Florence. The later and longer *Epistle against the Romans*, that came to us in the above-mentioned fifteenth-century manuscripts, consists of four major parts: (1) A theological introduction, with incipit: 'Formerly, in paradise, food and drink were not bread' (pages 191–5 in Popov's edition), a section completely missing

¹² Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*.

¹³ *Epistolia na rimliany*. Popov, 189–238. Most recently, scholars have re-discovered the text which resulted in new publications, containing English translations of its various fragments: B. Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts Preserved Only in Slavonic and the Entrance of Constans II into Rome in 663', in *Biblical Apocrypha in South-Eastern Europe and Related Areas: Proceedings of the Session Held at the 12th International Congress of South-East European Studies (Bucharest, 2-6 September 2019)*, ed. Maria Cioată, Anisava Miltenova, and Emanuela Timotin (Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei "Carol I", 2021), 125–217; M. V. Korogodina and B. Lourié, 'On the Perdition of the Higher Intellect and on the Image of Light: Critical Edition, Translation, and Commentary', in *Apocryphal and Esoteric Sources in the Development of Christianity and Judaism: The Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Beyond*, ed. I. Dorfmann-Lazarev (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 217–61. For the manuscript tradition of the *Epistolia na rimliany*: M. V. Korogodina, *Kormchie knigi XIV – pervoi poloviny XVII veka* (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Al'ians-Arkheo, 2017), I: 167–179; G. S. Barankova, 'Tekstologicheskie i iazykovye osobennosti antilatinskogo apokrificheskogo pamiatnika "Skazanie o dvenadtsati apostolakh, o latine i opresnotsekh"', *Vestnik pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta. Serii 1: Bogoslovie. Filosofii. Religiovedenie* 27 (2009): 67–92; Pavlov, *Kriticheskie opyty po istorii drevneishei greko-russkoi polemiki*, 80–1; Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*, 163–4; A. V. Gorskii and K. I. Nevostruev, *Opisanie slavianskikh rukopisei Moskovskoi sinodal'noi biblioteki*, vol. III. *Raznye bogoslovskie sochineniia* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1857), 301–2.

¹⁴ R. P. Dmitrieva, 'Chet'i sborniki XV veka kak zhanr', *TODRL* 27 (1972): 163. This part of the manuscript, however, was written not by Efrosin himself. See S. N. Kisterev, 'Voprosy izucheniia rukopisnogo nasledii Efrosina Belozerskogo', *TODRL* 60 (2009): 465.

¹⁵ Barankova distinguishes four redactions of the text: 1. The earliest and shortest one; 2. The longest one which is older than the subsequent two versions; 3. The version of the Rus Nomocanons (*Kormchaia Kniga*); 4. A unique redaction which has survived in one single seventeenth-century manuscript. Barankova, 'Tekstologicheskie i iazykovye osobennosti'; *Vestnik pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta. Serii 1: Bogoslovie. Filosofii. Religiovedenie* 27 (2009): 67–92. For the question of redactions, see also: Korogodina, *Kormchie knigi*, I: 167–179.

from the early short version. It has been recently published by Maria Korogodina and Basil Lourié under the title *On the Perdition of the Higher Intellect and on the Image of Light*,¹⁶ (2) A florilegium about the foundation of the Church in the apostolic times, with the incipit: 'A sermon against you, cunning Romans' (pages 195–212; the short version begins here); (3) A polemic against the use of unleavened bread with excerpts from Niketas Stethatos's anti-azyme treatise discussed earlier (the latter are missing from the short version which does not contain this part in full; pages 212–30; incipit: 'Oh, great church of Rome'); and (4) A lengthier concluding text which, although it defines itself as 'Sermon against the Romans', is more of a moral-theological treatise than a typical polemical writing (pages 230–8). The Greek prototype of this text is unknown, in both its shorter (*Tale*) and longer (*Epistle*) versions. The sources of its various components have not yet been explored, despite Basil Lourié's discoveries which link some of its fragments to as early as the seventh century.¹⁷ It is, therefore, still impossible to say whether the text is a Slavic or Byzantine compilation, or—most plausibly—a combination of the two.

Whatever may be the case, there is no doubt that the oldest part of the compilation is the apostolic florilegium (2) which is present in all versions of the text. It is this florilegium which contains Efrosin's marginal note. Lourié has distinguished six, sometimes contradicting, fragments within the florilegium which reflect different ecclesiastical situations of the first millennium.¹⁸ Despite this heterogeneity and obvious contradictions, the florilegium suggests a clear late Byzantine anti-Latin editorial intention. The compiler put together these texts to create a narrative rebuttal of some fundamental claims of Roman ecclesiology, on the one hand, and to highlight the apostolic origins of the Byzantine liturgical practices, on the other. The text asserts that Christ 'consecrated the twelve apostles and appointed them true patriarchates'.¹⁹ It describes, in different versions, how the apostles divided the oikumene between themselves after the Ascension of Christ in Jerusalem.²⁰ Peter received the Western part of the world and James became the Patriarch of Jerusalem where he established the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the liturgical order of the Church.²¹ The text promotes the idea of equality of the apostles (thus challenging Peter's primacy), highlights the significance of Jerusalem (against Rome) as the starting point of apostolic preaching and as the first Patriarchate. It links numerous rites and liturgical objects of the Orthodox Church—alien from the Latin liturgical tradition—with the apostolic tradition: the azymes, the Zeon rite (pouring hot water into the wine of Eucharist), the epitaphios, as well as the liturgical vestments of the priests—the omophorion,

¹⁶ Korogodina and Lourié, 'On the Perdition of the Higher Intellect and on the Image of Light'.

¹⁷ Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts'.

¹⁸ Lourié, 127–129.

¹⁹ Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*, 196.

²⁰ Popov, 199, 203, 205.

²¹ Popov, 199–205.

the phelonion, and the epitachelion.²² It emphasizes the presence of the Theotokos in the life of the Jerusalem Church, whilst Christ's words about Apostle Peter, 'You are Peter' (Matt 16:18), are not mentioned. Here Linus is called the first bishop (not patriarch) of Rome who was followed by Peter.²³

The longest text within the florilegium and its focal point is an excerpt attributed to St Clement of Rome (+98), which describes Apostle Peter's activity in Rome (*Acts of Peter in Rome*).²⁴ The *Acts* narrates the baptism of the Roman emperor's relative, Sophia—a key narrative from the perspective of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.²⁵ The anonymous Roman emperor wished to test Peter's power by asking him to heal his relative, Sophia. After her miraculous healing, the Pagan emperor agreed to baptize the Roman people, including Sophia. Thereafter, Sophia distributed her fortune, became a nun (although she had a husband) and built a 'Church named Sophia which was dedicated to the Mother of God'.²⁶ This Sophia Church was the first church in Rome and once Peter placed the relics of Deacon Stephen there, who had suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem (Acts 8:2), the apostle himself glorified the act of Sophia: 'Now Prophet David sings, crying out and saying: "Virgins shall be brought to the King after her" (Ps 44:15), that is *the Church of the Mother of God, the virginal soul*. Now the Bridegroom Christ opens the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom. Now we all come together to see this beauty of the incorruptible banquet.'²⁷

Peter's sermon is based on the well-known allegorical exegesis of biblical nuptial symbolism: the bride is Sophia who simultaneously is the symbol of the Church, the Christian soul and the Mother of God.²⁸ It is certainly intentional that Peter's preaching about the Church in Rome suddenly turns into a sermon about the azymes to the 'cunning Romans' (3) highlighting the contrast between the devotion of the Old Rome and the 'apostasy' of the present one.²⁹ It is clear, then, that Efrosin's marginalia are references to Peter's words about Sophia and her church in Rome.

In order to understand the purpose of Efrosin's addition to the Sophia commentary, it is necessary to decode the Sophia-narrative by leaving aside its historical references—apparently unclear for the reader in Rus.³⁰ This text is a

²² Azymes: 211–12; the Zeon rite: 206; the epitaphios: 205, the priestly vestments: 203–204.

²³ Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*, 205.

²⁴ Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts', 157–210.

²⁵ Popov, 206–11. Lourié links the figure of Sophia with Flavia Domitilla and that of her husband with Titus Flavius Clemens. Since Flavia Domitilla was the granddaughter of Emperor Vespasian (69–79), Sophia's alleged relative might have been either Emperor Titus (79–81) or Emperor Domitian (81–96), both being the cousins of Titus Flavius Clemens. Lourié, 171–73; 182–86.

²⁶ Popov, 207. Lourié identifies this church of Sophia in Rome dedicated to the Theotokos with the church of Santa Maria Antiqua: Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts', 181–196.

²⁷ Popov, 211.

²⁸ See Chapter 2.

²⁹ Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*, 211.

³⁰ For a reconstruction of the historical realia behind this narrative: Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts', 157–210.

narrative exegesis of Proverbs 9:1–5 which operates with the dual interpretation of Sophia developed during the Arian Controversy. The emperor's relative is an allegorical figure identical with the Sophia of Proverbs 9, being the personification of Christ who builds his/her church. Since the temple of Christ is the Theotokos, Sophia's church in Rome is dedicated to the Virgin. Simultaneously, however, Sophia, is also a symbol of the Church who although had been married before (cf. 'I am dark, but lovely'—Song 1:5), now became Christ's bride and, as a virgin, even a nun, 'not having spot or wrinkle' (Eph 5:27): the church of virginal souls.³¹ She is of imperial descent as she is the bride of the King (cf. Ps 44). Thus, the Sophia narrative recounts the foundation of the Church in Rome in allegorical form.

This allegorical narrative has a more concrete meaning in the light of Byzantine anti-Latin polemics, which is its direct context. Although the text emphasizes Jerusalem's status over Rome (Patriarch James appointed the first bishop of Rome, Linus), it still has a focus on Rome. The narrative clearly reflects the main tenets of Byzantine ecclesiology which while maintaining the significance of Jerusalem as the mother of churches (cf. Gal 4:26; Ps 86:5), accepted Rome's first place in the Pentarchy on the basis of the *principle of accommodation*, or *secular primacy* due to Rome's political significance as the imperial city.³² From this perspective, Sophia's imperial connections are not mere biblical or, possibly, historical references. The fact that Sophia is a relative of the Roman emperor creates an implied link between the two imperial church foundations: those of Hagia Sophia in Rome and in Constantinople. Thus, the *Epistle against the Romans* contains an alternative, albeit overlooked, legend about the foundation of the Hagia Sophia which traces the foundation of Justinian's church back not simply to the Emperor Constantine, but indirectly to Rome itself and presents Constantinople as the New Rome.³³ This connection means that Apostle Peter's words about the Sophia Church in Rome, dedicated to the Mother of God, are also applicable to Constantinople, to the New Rome. The Church of Rome, founded by the apostle, is now in Constantinople, firstly because it is the new imperial city and secondly because Rome lost its significance as a consequence of its heresy. These two claims constituted the basis of the Byzantine rebuttal of Rome's primacy and of its claim for the same ecclesiastical status as that of Old Rome.³⁴

The first statement (correlation of empire and ecclesiastical primacy) is represented by the figure of the Roman emperor, the ancestor of Byzantine rulers, and by his imperial relative, Sophia. The second (correlation of true faith and ecclesiastical primacy) is demonstrated by the emphasis on the biblical concept of New Jerusalem or New Israel as the symbol of the Church. The *Epistle* claims that the

³¹ For the nuptial symbolism of Christian ecclesiology, see Chapters 2 and 5.

³² See Chapters 5 and 7.

³³ For the Byzantine legend of the foundation of the Constantinople Hagia Sophia and its Slavonic translation, see Chapter 3.

³⁴ Gahbauer, *Gegen den Primat des Papstes*, 130, 189–223.

hierarchy of ecclesiastical ranks was established by the apostles in the Christian Church of Jerusalem which replaced the old Israel. It was 'the New Israel, the new priests, the new Church, the new sacrifice for the new people'.³⁵ The *Epistle* utilizes the same opposition between the Old and New Testaments and their sacrifices which were developed in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and constituted the core of Byzantine anti-azyme arguments. Although the life of the Christian Church began in Jerusalem, the apostles decided to establish Churches similar to the Church of Jerusalem everywhere on the globe, following Christ's order: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . !' (Matt 28:19). Accordingly, in the sermon, given by Apostle Peter after the baptism of the Roman people, Rome is called the New Israel: 'This is the New Israel, this is the holy nation which has been purified by the water and by the Holy Spirit.'³⁶

The symbol and embodiment of the Roman Church, the New Jerusalem and New Israel, is the first Roman church built by Sophia: 'the Church of the Mother of God, the virginal soul'. The reference to the Hagia Sophia church in the anti-Latin context of the *Epistle* indicates the Byzantine perception of Constantinople as the New Rome, despite the fact that the explicit Constantinopolitan references are strikingly missing from the text. In the light of these observations, it is not difficult to recognize the significance of Efrosin's marginal additions to the Sophia commentary. It identifies the Church of Sophia, the Wisdom of God, that is the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, not merely with the Constantinopolitan, but more importantly with the Roman Hagia Sophia church. Efrosin implicitly juxtaposes the Hagia Sophias of three Romes: in the first Rome, it was founded by the imperial relative, Sophia; in the second one, in Constantinople, it was founded by Constantine the Great and the Emperor Justinian and in the third one, in Novgorod, it was founded by Prince Vladimir, the grandson of the New Constantine in Rus, Grand Prince Vladimir.

As a result, the Kirillo-Belozersk version of the Sophia commentary demonstrates firstly, that the well-known 'Three Rome' theory was beginning to take shape already by the 1470s; and secondly that the idea appeared bound up with the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and commentary. Furthermore, the marginal note contextualizes the 'Three Rome' theory and the Sophia icon, both of which were integral parts of Russian anti-Latin polemics which, after the Union of Florence, primarily were directed against not the first, but the second Rome, the Latin Constantinople. From this perspective, it is also evident that the 'Third Rome' theory is, in fact, the Russian re-use of the Byzantine anti-Latin ecclesiastical argument of the so-called *secular primacy*. Since then, paradoxically, the anti-Roman concept of New Rome was used by the Russians against this second Rome

³⁵ Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor*, 200.

³⁶ Popov, 210.

itself, the formulation of the ‘Third Rome’ theory logically derives from the very essence of the Russian anti-Florentine argument.

Sophia in Novgorod, the Third Rome

The Byzantine concept of *secular primacy* operates with the Byzantine perceptions of true faith and empire. We have seen how the winged Sophia in the Novgorod icon visualized the first, and Efrosin’s marginal note also sheds light on the remarkable fact that the crowned royal Sophia symbolizes the second pillar of the Byzantine ‘New Rome’ theory—empire. The Sophia with wings is the relative of the Roman emperor, she refers to the ‘imperial’ foundation of not only the Roman but also the Russian Hagia Sophia, the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral: it visualizes the imperial foundation of the Rus Church, repeatedly emphasized in the letters of Vasilii II by reference to his ‘imperial’ ancestor, the ‘tsar’ Vladimir the Great.

The Byzantine idea of *secular primacy*, developed in the period of the Ecumenical Councils, had different meanings and functions depending on the time and context of its usage.³⁷ In the context of fifteenth-century Russian anti-Latin polemics, it aimed to support the Russian demand for ecclesiastical autocephalous status. Consequently, through depicting the true faith and imperial origin of the Church, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is a visualization of the Russian Church struggling for its independence from the Latin Constantinople and rivaling with the Kyivan Metropolitanate which until the 1480s remained in union with Rome. Efrosin’s marginal note in the manuscript of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery (located in the territory of the Moscow Grand Duchy), therefore, reinforces the claim that the *Novgorod Sophia* icon cannot be interpreted within the framework of Novgorod-Moscow rivalry.³⁸ The Archbishopric of Novgorod was perceived as part of the Russian Church and the Novgorod St Sophia Cathedral as one of its symbols that overshadowed the other Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, the seat of the Kyivan Metropolitan.

A further question, raised by Efrosin’s manuscript, is the correlation between the *Epistle against the Romans* and the Sophia commentary: whether this anti-Latin text might already have influenced the creation of the commentary at its first stage. The *Epistle*’s short version certainly existed by the end of the fourteenth century, and its long redaction has survived in manuscripts roughly coeval with those of the Sophia commentary. The long version has two additions to the short one: an introduction (1) and a concluding text (4). The impression is that these two texts constitute a frame for the two anti-Latin texts about the acts of the

³⁷ For a bibliography of the Byzantine concept of ‘secular primacy’ see Chapter 5.

³⁸ See Chapter 11.

apostles (2) and the azymes (3). In common with the Sophia commentary, there are two leitmotifs of these framing texts which create a conceptual link between the four parts of the *Epistle*: the motif of Wisdom and the clothing metaphor.

The *Epistle's* introduction, published under the title *On the Perdition of the Higher Intellect and on the Image of Light*, narrates the history of the Fall and Salvation of man through the juxtaposition of spiritual and corporeal principles. Accordingly, the opposition of spiritual and corporeal wisdoms, true faith versus heresy, is a recurrent element in the entire text. It is the main message of the concluding text which presents heresy as a spiritual-corporeal distortion and the true faith as a cleansed, redeemed status of the soul and the body.³⁹ In the context of the leaven polemics, the leavened bread, the ensouled body of Christ, is 'the spiritual bread', which is contrasted with the carnal, unleavened bread.⁴⁰ This concept appears already in the very first sentence of the *Epistle*, which suggests that for author of this text, azymes constitute the main symbol of heresy. The heresy is called human wisdom and identified with ancient philosophy and its protagonists (Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Cato, and Donatus).⁴¹ The text describes how this human wisdom will be judged at the end of times. The *Epistle* concludes with an eschatological image of those redeemed nations, the virginal souls, who had not followed the human wisdom, 'the corporeal blindness', but had one faith in the Holy Trinity.⁴²

This account of the saints bears a striking resemblance to the Sophia commentary. The redeemed soul, just as Sophia, is compared with the eagle: she 'is born incorruptible and is clothed into vestments woven by God'.⁴³ The detailed description of these garments, although not literally identical with those of the Novgorod Sophia, is strikingly similar: the symbolic interpretations of the girdle, the gloves, the sandals, and the helmet are rooted in *The Epistle to the Galatians* which compares the baptism with clothing in Christ (Gal 3:27). In his sermon, Apostle Peter also uses the same metaphor when he describes the New Israel, the freshly baptized Church of Rome.⁴⁴ The numerous parallelisms between the Sophia commentary and the *Epistle against the Romans* suggest a strong relationship between the two texts.⁴⁵ Hence it is conceivable that the anti-Latin polemics of the *Epistle* might have inspired the creation of the Sophia commentary.

This proposition raises the question about the possible Byzantine visualizations of the Roman Saint Sophia narrative. Unfortunately, the Greek originals of the *Epistle* have not yet been explored, but there are some unique Sophia representations in Crete which suggest that the legend about Saint Sophia was well known beyond Rus. Vasiliki Tsamakda has found sixteen representations of Saint Sophia

³⁹ Popov, 227, 228, 230, 233. ⁴⁰ Popov, 217–18, 226. ⁴¹ Popov, 233–4.

⁴² Popov, 233–4, 237. ⁴³ Popov, 235. ⁴⁴ Popov, 210.

⁴⁵ For further parallelisms and allusions, see the Critical edition in the Appendix.

in orans (praying) position in fourteenth-century Cretan art.⁴⁶ The singularity of these images is that the orans figure of Sophia in maphorion (either standing or in bust) is accompanied by the inscription 'Holy Wisdom of God' or 'Holy Wisdom, the Word of God'. Since the iconography cannot be identified with any of the known saints with the name Sophia, Tsamakda has suggested that these Cretan images are allegorical images of Sophia, who has built her temple in Proverbs 9. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that in half of the examples, there is a link between the Cretan Sophia representations and the images of the founders of these churches or their foundation inscriptions.⁴⁷ This latter observation makes it plausible that in Crete, Sophia, the personified wisdom and the legendary founder of the first Roman church, was depicted—just as in the *Novgorod Sophia* icon.

The fact that nearly all the Cretan Sophia images are from the fourteenth century is also significant. It was also at this time when the different visualizations of Proverbs 9, 'Wisdom has built her house' disseminated in Byzantine art from the Balkans to Novgorod.⁴⁸ In investigating the reasons for the wide occurrence of this iconography, scholars have so far overlooked the problem of anti-Latin polemics. Usually the significance of the Hesychast controversies has been highlighted, but without consideration being given to the anti-Western context of these controversies.⁴⁹ The narrative of the Roman Sophia, however, indicates that there existed an anti-Latin interpretation of Proverbs 9 in Byzantium. Since the exegesis of Proverbs 9 had an intertwined ecclesiological, Eucharistic and Christological significance, the question of the fourteenth-century dissemination of Byzantine 'Wisdom has built her house' iconography requires a reconsideration.

That the legend of Sophia who built her church in Rome was not an isolated tradition, is proved not only by visual evidence but by also other hagiographic texts. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Aleksandr Bobrov has attributed great significance to the construction of the stone church of St Anastasia on the north-east side of the Sophia Cathedral by archbishop Evfimii II in 1440, immediately after the Union of Florence.⁵⁰ The basis of his argument being the Slavic legend of St Anastasia the Older who was a nun in the monastery of Saint Sophia in Rome, the hegumena (abbess) of which was also called Sophia.⁵¹ Anastasia suffered martyrdom in the third century. Her legend was widely disseminated also

⁴⁶ V. Tsamakda, 'Darstellungen der Hl. Sophia bzw. der Weisheit Gottes in der Kretischen Wandmalerei', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 101 (2008): 209–30.

⁴⁷ Tsamakda, 221–2. ⁴⁸ See also Chapter 4.

⁴⁹ For a historiographical survey see: Brzozowska, 'Wisdom Has Built Her House'. For the Cretan visualizations of Prov 9: Tsamakda, 'Darstellungen der Hl. Sophia', 228; I. Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, vol. I. Rethymnon Province (London: Pindar, 1999), 350–1.

⁵⁰ Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 206–12.

⁵¹ VMCh, vol. VI: 19–31 October (1880), 1987–96. The editors of the text provided also the version of the manuscript of Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery from the second half of the fifteenth century, KB 19/1258. For this manuscript see O. V. Tvorogov, 'K Izucheniiu Oktiabr'skoi Chet'ei Minei XV v.', *TODRL* 58 (1998): 282–9.

in Greek which signifies again that the tradition of the Roman Sophia church was known in Byzantium.⁵² In Bobrov's interpretation, Anastasia who died for her faith as a 'true bride of Christ' encouraged by hegumenia Sophia, served as model for the Novgorodians after the Union of Florence to keep their faith.⁵³ The *Epistle against the Romans* offers a further explanation for the building of the church of St Anastasia beside the Sophia Cathedral: the function of this church was to reconstruct the sacred space of the first Rome in Novgorod. The square around the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral was identified with the Sophia Monastery in Rome, the Sophia church which was called by Apostle Peter himself 'the Church of the Mother of God, the virginal soul'.⁵⁴ Thus the church of St Anastasia beside the Sophia Cathedral conveyed ideas which were present in contemporaneous Slavic anti-Latin polemical literature. Whilst the church of St Anastasia highlighted the idea of true faith, the first pillar of Byzantine concept of *secular primacy*, the monumental church of Boris and Gleb, the martyr sons of Vladimir the Great, in Novgorod (Okolotka), constructed by Evfimii 'on old foundations' in 1441, recalled its second pillar—empire.⁵⁵

There is no reason, therefore, to look for Western theological ideas behind the liturgical innovations of Archbishop Gennadii who dedicated the Sophia Cathedral to the Mother of God and established the Dormition as its feast. This act—which went against the earlier dedication of the church of Christ-Sophia—might have had various motives. First, the Dormition is an emphatically ecclesiological feast celebrating the event when the apostles surrounded the Virgin's deathbed, 'the life-giving fount' in Jerusalem:⁵⁶ 'James the first bishop and brother of the Lord was there, and so was Peter, the honoured leader and chief of the disciples, and the whole sacred fellowship of the apostles.'⁵⁷ The hymn of the feast describes a similar (but less polemical) ecclesiological concept to what we have seen in the *Epistle against the Romans*. Furthermore, there is a conceptual link

⁵² For the Greek versions of the legend: BHG 76–78, Anastasia's feast in the Greek calendar: 12, 28, 29 October. The link between the cults of St. Sophia and Anastasia is discussed by Basil Lourié: Lourié, 'A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts', 183. See also: F. Halkin, *Légendes Grecques de 'Martyres Romaines'* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1973), 158–68; H. Delehay, *Étude sur le légendier romain: les saints de novembre et de décembre* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1936), 151–71, 221–58. One of the Cretan Sophia frescoes (Chasi, St John, Nomos Chania, Eparchy Selino) represents Sophia as martyr with cross in her hands, beside St Anastasia: presumably, St Anastasia is depicted here with one of the Sophias of her Sophia Monastery in Rome, possibly Anastasia's hegumeneia. Tsamakda, 'Darstellungen Der Hl. Sophia', 213.

⁵³ VMCh, vol. VI: 19–31 October (1880), 1989.

⁵⁴ Ilia Antipov challenged Bobrov's hypothesis by pointing out that before the stone one, there was an earlier wooden church of Anastasia beside the Sophia Cathedral that was built at the time of 1417 plague (Antipov, 'Tserkvi Sv. Anastasii v Novgorode XV–XVI vv.', 174). Anastasia's legend, however, which narrates Anastasia's death for her faith in Rome, does not support Antipov's criticism. It is very likely that by linking plague with the idea of apostasy, the 1417 construction of the wooden church, which re-created the sacred space of the legendary Roman Saint Sophia Monastery in the Novgorod Kremlin, already had an anti-Latin tenet.

⁵⁵ Cf. Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka*, 211.

⁵⁶ Mary and K. Ware, *The Festal Menaion*, 522.

⁵⁷ Mary and K. Ware, 511.

between the idea of Wisdom and the Dormition which celebrates that the Theotokos, the temple of Sophia, 'the tabernacle of the living God' 'has been transported into immortal life'.⁵⁸ This connection is expressed by the fact that Proverbs 9:1–11 are amongst the Dormition's liturgical readings.

Secondly, it reinforced the identification between Novgorod and Rome, the New Jerusalem, which now both had a Sophia church dedicated to 'the Mother of God, the virginal soul'. The Theotokos-Sophia Cathedral of Novgorod promoted the Orthodoxy of Novgorod. This idea took on new significance in the context of Gennadii's fight against the heresy of the so-called Judaizers.⁵⁹ The heretics, allegedly taught by Jews from Lithuania, challenged some fundamental dogmas of Orthodoxy including Triadology, Christology, Eucharistic doctrine, and icon theology. The struggle against the Judaizers, however, was inseparably intertwined with the anti-Latin polemics of the 'New Israel' which utilized, as we have seen, primarily anti-Jewish arguments, in particular, regarding the azymes.

Sophia in Moscow, the Third Rome

Archbishop Gennadii, originally a Muscovite cleric, had a further intention with his new dedication of the Sophia Cathedral. In 1478 Novgorod was subordinated to Moscow not only in ecclesiastical but also in political terms. The new dedication feast of the city's cathedral highlighted the link between the Novgorod church of Divine Wisdom and the Dormition Cathedral of the Metropolitans in Moscow.⁶⁰ The first Dormition Cathedral was constructed in the middle of the fourteenth century which coincided with the transfer of the residence of the Metropolitans of Kyiv from Vladimir to the emerging city of Moscow at the time of Metropolitan Peter (1308–26).⁶¹ It is not coincidence then that Vladimir also had a historic Dormition Cathedral founded by Andrei Bogoliubskii, the Grand Prince of Vladimir and Suzdal (1157–74) in 1158. The Kremlin Dormition Cathedral, therefore, expressed a continuity with the Principality of Vladimir, the previous ecclesiastical and political centre of Rus. Bogoliubskii's Dormition Cathedral also had an intertwined symbolic link with both Kyiv (the Dormition Church of the Kyiv Cave Monastery was consecrated in 1089) and the Constantinople Blachernai church, the significance of which was analysed earlier regarding its miraculous Theotokos icons.⁶² The connection between the churches of Vladimir and Kyiv had enhanced ecclesiastical

⁵⁸ Mary and K. Ware, 522, 525.

⁵⁹ Kvilidze, 'Ikona Sofii Premudrosti Bozhiei'; Pliukhanova, 'O traditsiakh sofiskikh i uspenskikh tserkvei'.

⁶⁰ Pliukhanova, 'O Traditsiakh Sofiskikh i Uspenskikh Tserkvei', 501–3; Florovskii, 'O Pochitanii Sofii', 488–9.

⁶¹ Pliukhanova, 'O Traditsiakh Sofiskikh i Uspenskikh Tserkvei', 494–5.

⁶² Pliukhanova, 492–5. For the Blachernai church in Constantinople, see Chapter 8.



Fig. 12.2. Western entrance of the St Sophia Cathedral with frescoes from 1528, Novgorod.

Photo: author.

significance after the thirteenth century when the Metropolitans of Kyiv and All Rus, due to the Mongol invasion, moved to Vladimir. By becoming a Dormition Cathedral, the Novgorodian Sophia was also linked, through this chain of historical references, to Moscow, Vladimir, and to the Theotokos churches of Kyiv and Constantinople. Furthermore, the second building of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral—of which the prototype was the Vladimir Dormition Cathedral—was constructed in 1473–5. After the Council of Florence, this new Kremlin Dormition Cathedral became the centre of the *de facto* autocephalous Russian Church and the symbol of the anti-unionist idea and of Russian ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople.⁶³

Even more important, however, was the inverse effect this dedication had. Not only did the Novgorod Sophia become a Dormition Cathedral, but, as a result of the shared dedication, the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral could have been regarded as the Moscow Hagia Sophia—the Sophia Church of ‘the Mother of God, the virginal soul’. After the separation of the Metropolitanate of Kyiv, and its

⁶³ A. L. Batalov, ‘Stroitel’stvo moskovskogo Uspenskogo sobora i samoidentifikatsiia Rusi: K istorii zamysla Mitropolita Filippa I’, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Vizantiia, Rus’, Zapadnaia Evropa—iskusstvo i kul’tura*, ed. L. I. Lifshits (St. Petersburg: D. Bulanin, 2002), 353–61.

Hagia Sophia, from Moscow Metropolitanate in 1458, reference to the other Russian Hagia Sophia in Novgorod, the symbol of the ecclesiastical succession from Constantinople, was particularly relevant for Moscow. Furthermore, the Novgorod Sophia was founded by the grandson of Vladimir the Great, thus constituting the integral part of the Kyivan legacy which the Moscow rulers successfully claimed for themselves, as we have already seen in Vasiliï II's letter.⁶⁴ However, while claiming their links to the Kyivan legacy and Novgorodian Hagia Sophia both visually and verbally, the Muscovites erased the rival Kyiv Sophia Cathedral from their historical memory.⁶⁵

The most important character in the Muscovite appropriation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon and its underlying concept was Archbishop Makarii (1526–42). He, much like his predecessor Gennadii, moved from Moscow to Novgorod. His first commissions were related to the Sophia icon. In 1528, in the same year as when the iconostasis of the Sophia Cathedral was transformed, Makarii commissioned external frescoes over the western gates of the cathedral.⁶⁶ The new location and the new context of the iconography as an external wall painting powerfully conveyed the visual identification of the three Hagia Sophia Churches in Rome, Constantinople, and Novgorod as symbols of Orthodox faith. Below the large image of the *Old Testament Trinity*, there are two images in pairs. On the left, there is the *Acheiropoietos* (image of Christ 'painted without hands'), on the right it is the *Novgorod Sophia* (Figs 12.2–12.3; Cat. 6).⁶⁷ The image of the Holy Trinity and the *Acheiropoietos* icon visualizing Christ's dual natures are a visual compendium of the faith of the New Israel and New Rome. The *Acheiropoietos* may have also referred to the original dedication of the Sophia Cathedral of Christ. The New Rome is symbolized by a personified Bride-Sophia between the Theotokos and the John the Baptist.

There is an analogous arrangement of images in the frescoes on the eastern façade of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral (Figs 12.4–12.5; Cat. 24). The central image of the so-called *New Testament Trinity* or *Synthronoi* (the anthropomorphic Father and Son on a shared throne with the dove of the Holy Spirit) is flanked by the images of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos* to the south (a reference to the dedication of the cathedral of the Marian feast of the Dormition) and the *Novgorod Sophia* to the north. This correspondence between the Kremlin and

⁶⁴ J. Pelenski, *The Contest for the Legacy of Kyivan Rus'* (Boulder, Col.: Columbia University Press, 1998); Pliguzov, 'On the Title "Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Rus"' ; Ch. J. Halperin, 'The Russian Land and the Russian Tsar: The Emergence of Muscovite Ideology, 1380–1408', *Forschungen Zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 23 (1976): 7–103. See also Chapter 10.

⁶⁵ For the absence of the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral in the Muscovite and Rus historical chronicles: Pliukhanova, 'O traditsiakh sofiiskikh i uspenskikh tserkvei', 492, 495.

⁶⁶ A. B. Grebenshchikova and V. V. Sergienia, 'Tekhniko-tekhnologicheskie problemy restavratsii rospisei zapadnogo fasada Sofiiskogo sobora v Velikom Novgorode', *Novgorod i novgorodskaiia zemlia: iskusstvo i restavratsiia* 4 (2011): 256–62.

⁶⁷ M. A. Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh khramov: Vizantiia, Balkany, Drevniaia Rus'* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2002), 174.

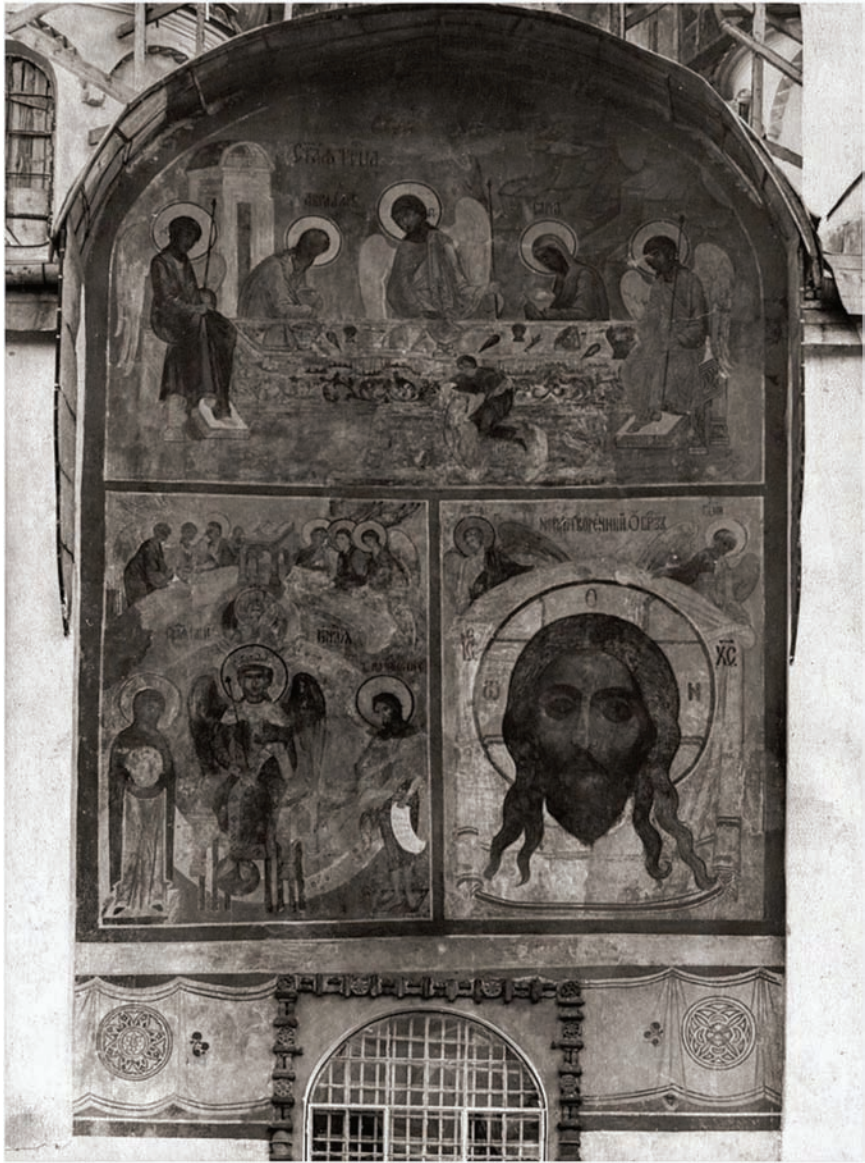


Fig. 12.3. *Old Testament Holy Trinity, Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, and Acheiropoietos*, external fresco over the Western entrance, St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, 1528. Photo from 1948.

Credit: Novgorod State Integrated Museum Reserve, Veliky Novgorod.

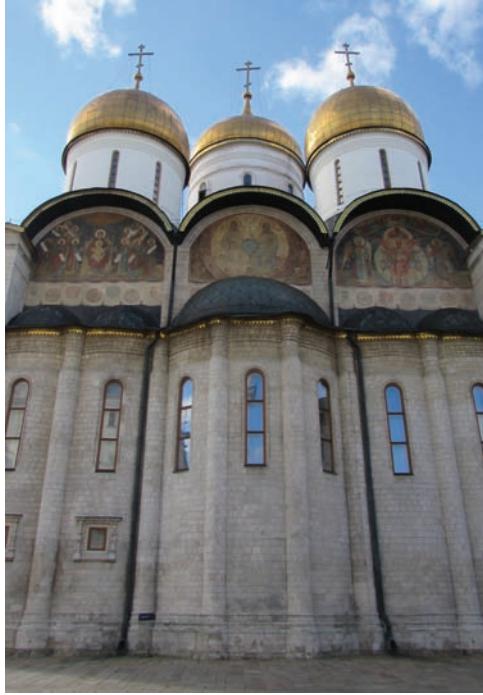


Fig. 12.4. Nazarii Istomin and Leontii Timofeiev: *Synaxis of the Theotokos, Synthronoi, and Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, external frescoes over the eastern apses, Dormition Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow, 1626.

Photo: author.



Fig. 12.5. Nazarii Istomin and Leontii Timofeiev: *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, external fresco over the north-eastern apse, Dormition Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow, 1626 (iconography possibly from the sixteenth century).

Photo: author.

Novgorod frescoes suggest that the appearance of images of the *Novgorod Sophia* on the external walls of the cathedral of the Moscow metropolitans can be linked with Makarii, who became the head of the Moscow Church in 1542.

Unfortunately, despite their cultural and iconographic significance, a lack of study means that almost nothing is known about the date and circumstances of the commissioning of the eastern external frescoes of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral.⁶⁸ The paintings in the lunettes over the three apses have been painted over on several occasions over the centuries. Although the earliest textual evidence for these frescoes state that they were painted (and not restored) by Nazarii Istomin and Leontii Timofeiev in 1626, Briusova has argued that they are coeval with the internal murals made in 1514–15.⁶⁹ The Sophia image, however, undermines this hypothesis. By referring to the murals of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral, the fresco on the external wall of the Moscow Dormition Cathedral cannot pre-date the Novgorod one.⁷⁰

The iconography of the Sophia fresco in the Moscow Kremlin reinforces the suggestion that it was either commissioned by Makarii or commissioned soon after his death. In contrast to the Novgorod fresco, which faithfully follows the iconography of the cathedral's local icon, the Kremlin fresco shows both the Mother of God and John the Baptist, frontally depicted, with wings, while John elevates his right hand in a blessing position. John's frontal and blessing position appears in two other Sophia images from Moscow which were undoubtedly commissioned by Makarii. The first is the apse fresco of the Archangel Cathedral, the necropolis of the Russian tsars and Moscow grand princes. The mural shows *Novgorod Sophia* in the apse conch which is traditionally occupied by the Mother of God (Cat. 18; Fig. 12.6).⁷¹ Here John appears in a very similar way as in the external mural of the Dormition cathedral, frontally depicted, with a blessing right hand, but without wings. The iconographic programme of this church is

⁶⁸ Orlova, 225; M. A. Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh pamiatnikov arkitektury: Vizantiia, Balkany, Drevniaia Rus'* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 210–11; V. G. Briusova, 'Kompozitsiia "Novozavetnoi Troitsy" v stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora (k voprosu o sodержanii naruzhnykh rospisei)', in *Uspenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia: materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. E. S. Smirnova (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 87–99; A. I. Uspenskii, 'Istoriia stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora v Moskve', *Drevnosti: Trudy Imperatorskogo moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* 19, no. 3 (1902): 47–70.

⁶⁹ Briusova, 'Kompozitsiia "Novozavetnoi Troitsy" v stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora', 87–8, 99; Uspenskii, 'Istoriia stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora v Moskve', 59. Briusova refers to Uspenskii who, however, does not states anything regarding the dating of the eastern external frescoes. Another argument of Briusova (87, n. 4), supporting the early-sixteenth-century dating of the eastern external frescoes of the Dormition Cathedral, is the architecture itself: the lunettes over the altars were apparently designed for external frescoes. Orlova, however, also on iconographical basis, challenges their early dating, by assigning them to the period of Ivan the Terrible (1547–84). Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh khramov*, 225; Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh pamiatnikov*, 210–11.

⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the presence of the *Synthronoi* which also appeared after 1547 in Moscow painting, cf. Sarab'ianov, 'Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony', 175–81.

⁷¹ T. E. Samoiloova, *Kniazheskie portrety v rospisi Arkhangel'skogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremliia: ikonograficheskaiia programma XVI veka* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2004), 11, 78–83.



Fig. 12.6. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, fresco in the apse, Archangel Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow, seventeenth century (iconography from 1564).

Photo: Aleksandr Preobrazhensky.

thought to have been designed by Makarii himself who died the same year as when the painting of the church began, in 1564.⁷² Another image has been preserved on the sakkos of Makarii which was commissioned by Ivan the Terrible himself for the metropolitan in 1558. The lavish high priestly garment shows the *Novgorod Sophia* in a central silver plate on the back of the sakkos and a corresponding image of the Dormition on the front (Cat. 17). The fact that all of these Muscovite Sophia images show John in a very similar way points to a relationship between them.

These images leave hardly any doubt that it was the Metropolitan Makarii who brought the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography to Moscow. Further textual evidence is provided by Priest Silvestr in the Viskovatyi Affair in 1554 which proves that a *Novgorod Sophia* icon was amongst the innovative images commissioned for the Kremlin cathedrals after the 1547 fire.⁷³ Considering that during the reign of Ivan IV a series of miracle-working and precious images and objects from Novgorod (and other Russian cities) were transferred to Moscow, it can easily be conjectured that an icon of *Novgorod Sophia* was amongst these imported miraculous items.⁷⁴ There are many reasons to believe, therefore, that the bilateral icon in the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral (Cat. 1; Fig. 0.4) was transferred there in this period.⁷⁵

⁷² Samoilova, 9.

⁷³ See the *Introduction*. Sarab'ianov, 'Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony', 190.

⁷⁴ For the transfer of Novgorod art objects to Moscow during the reign of Ivan IV: Makhn'ko, *Pochitanie i sobiranie drevnikh ikon*, 58–71.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 11 and Appendix.

The blessing right hand of John, a shared motif of the Makarian Sophia images and the bilateral icon in the Annunciation Cathedral, supports this hypothesis.

It may be no coincidence then that Tsar Ivan IV commissioned a sakkos, with the images of Sophia and the Dormition, for Metropolitan Makarii precisely in 1558. This was the year of the beginning of Ivan IV's largest military project, the war against Livonia in the multi-confessional Baltic territories. Livonia belonged to the jurisdiction of the rival Kyivan Metropolitane and was experiencing a growing wave of Protestantism. Unsurprisingly, the rhetoric of the campaign was profoundly religious by representing it as a struggle for the true faith.⁷⁶ In this new historical context, the visual identification of the Kremlin see of the Moscow Metropolitans with the Roman Hagia Sophia church of the Mother of God was a powerful demonstration of the orthodoxy of the Russian Church. The juxtaposition of the Novgorod Sophia and the Dormition Cathedral on Makarii's sakkos as well as on the external Sophia fresco of the Dormition Cathedral aimed to present Moscow as a New Rome. This concept of New Rome expressed Moscow's claim of superiority over the Kyivan Metropolitanate and, simultaneously, Moscow's demand for the acknowledgement of its autocephalous status from Constantinople.

The story of Saint Sophia's conversion in Rome by the Apostle Peter in the *Epistle against the Romans* provided further opportunities to strengthen this conceptual link between the old and new Romes. By the time of Ivan IV, the Rus historical chronicles had grown to include *The Tale of the elevation of Panagia*.⁷⁷ As we have seen in Chapter 8, this text describes the miraculous appearance of the Mother of God to the Apostles after her dormition when during their meal the Apostles elevated the bread that was set aside for Christ. While the Sophia legend highlights the Roman idea, the narrative of the Panagia connects the anti-Latin claims over rite and the Church with the feast of Dormition. In the second half of the sixteenth century, a new version of the Sophia image appeared which, as discussed earlier, combined these two apostolic events. It shows the foundation of the Church of 'Sophia, the most pure Mother of God, that is the virginal soul' in Rome and the establishment of the rite of the elevation of Panagia, by placing Apostle Peter, breaking the bread, with the Mother of God and Sophia in the central axis of the image (Cat. 26; Fig. 12.7; see also Fig. 8.8). The image is framed by the figures of prophets holding the texts and the symbols of their

⁷⁶ An excellent analysis of this rhetoric which, however, overlooks the ecclesiastical aspects of the Livonian war: S. Bogatyrev, 'Battle for Divine Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Ivan IV's Campaign against Polotsk', in *The Military and Society in Russia: 1450–1917*, ed. E. Lohr and M. Poe (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), 325–63.

⁷⁷ *Skazanie o vozdvizhenii khleba sviatoi Bogoroditsi*, in: Tvorogov, *Letopisets ellinskii i rimskii*, I:215–16. See also: Porfir'ev, *Apokrificheskiia skazaniia o novozavetnykh litsakh*, 92–6. The text is also present in the *Illuminated Chronicle Compilation of Ivan IV (Litsevoi letopisnyi svod)* with the representation of the scene: GIM, Muzeinoe (Museum) coll. 358, f. 929r–930r. Edition of the text and the image: *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod*, III:263–5.



Fig. 12.7. *The Elevation of the Panagia and Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, second half of the sixteenth century.

prophecies about the birth of the Saviour from the Virgin—a borrowing from the iconography *Praise to the Mother of God*.⁷⁸

Aleksandr Preobrazhensky noticed that the seventeenth-century inventories of the Tobolsk Sophia Cathedral in Siberia (built in the 1620s) mentioned a Sophia image which they referred to as the ‘Polotsk Sophia’ (‘obraz Sofiei Premudrosti

⁷⁸ For the ‘*Praise to the Mother of God*’ iconography in Rus and Muscovy: Sarab’ianov, ‘Mestnyi riad ikonostasov’.



Fig. 12.8. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from the church of the Mother of God, Busovys'ko, Lviv region, second half of the sixteenth century. Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum, Lviv.

Source: Svientsitskyi-Sviatys'kyi 1929, plate 15.

Bozhii, perevod polotskoi').⁷⁹ In Tobolsk, according to the inventories, this Polotsk Sophia was paired with the icon *Praise to the Mother of God*. It is probable that the central image of this Marian icon was the scene of *The Elevation of the Panagia* which appeared, as we have seen in Chapter 8, as an independent iconography in Muscovite painting during the reign of Ivan IV (Fig. 8.7). Accordingly, the 'Polotsk Sophia' name suggests, as Preobrazhensky proposed, that this type of Wisdom image might have been created for the Polotsk Sophia Cathedral, occupied by Ivan IV in 1563, as the most victorious event of the Livonian war. Polotsk remained in Muscovite hands until 1579.⁸⁰ Throughout this occupation, the Polotsk bishopric went under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Metropolitanate. The ancient dedication of the newly occupied Polotsk Cathedral of St Sophia could have provided a good opportunity for the Muscovite ideologists

⁷⁹ Preobrazhenskii, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia i Iavlentie Bogomateri', 260. For the Tobolsk Sophia cathedral: Ch. Witzernath, 'Sophia—Divine Wisdom, and Justice in Seventeenth-Century Russia', *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 50, no. 2–3 (2009): 409–29.

⁸⁰ For the Sophiological rhetoric of the Polotsk campaign: A. I. Filiushkin and A. V. Kuz'min, *Kogda Polotsk byl rossiiskim: Polotskaia kampaniia Ivana Groznogo, 1563–1579 gg.* (Moscow: Russkie Vitiazi, 2017), 18–22; Bogatyrev, 'Battle for Divine Wisdom', 351–3. For the epistle of Pimen Chernyi, Archbishop of Novgorod (1552–1570) to tsar Ivan IV written on the occasion of the Polotsk campaign which mentions the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, a gift of the Novgorod prelate to the Muscovite ruler: Bogatyrev, 352. For Archbishop Pimen see also Cat. 15.

to convey their sophiological-ecclesiological ideas in the traditional territory of the Kyivan Metropolitanate. They used it to identify the Polotsk Sophia Church with the legendary Marian-Dormition Church of Apostle Peter in Rome. This identification had not only an anti-unionist message but also a clear pro-Moscow tenet which was further reinforced by the fact that the Moscow Dormition Cathedral was also founded by a Peter, the Metropolitan of Kyiv (1308–1326) who moved from Vladimir to Moscow.

A sixteenth-century Sophia icon from the Lviv region of Ukraine containing a unique iconography supports this hypothesis. Much like the combined Sophia-Elevation icons, it shows the Sophia flanked by two winged Johns (Baptist and Evangelist), but without the Mother of God (Cat. 25; Fig. 12.8). The absence of the Theotokos in this icon would suggest that the *Praise to the Mother of God*, possibly with the *Elevation of the Panagia*, was represented in a separate icon—as it was in Tobolsk and, supposedly, in Polotsk. The Sophia icon of the Lviv Museum indicates, therefore, that during the Livonian war a new version of Sophia iconography was invented to express the Muscovite anti-Latin Sophiological idea and its ties to the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral even more compellingly.

Both the Polotsk Sophia and the external Sophia fresco of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral display figures with wings flanking Sophia in order to enhance the ecclesiological-eschatological meaning of the icon. The winged figures hint at the eagle wings of the Woman of the Revelations, persecuted by the dragon (Rev 12:14).⁸¹ In the fresco of the Dormition Cathedral John the Baptist has a sword in his hand to visualize the wrath of the Lord against his enemies, that is the heretics. The idea of divine punishment of heresy was familiar in Ivan IV's Muscovy and especially during the Livonian war.⁸² All of these sixteenth-century innovations to the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography demonstrate the specifics of the process by which both the concept and the iconography of *Novgorod Sophia* were appropriated by Moscow. The Wisdom icon which was intended as a protest against the Union of Florence in Novgorod, now served the ideology of the new Russian Orthodox 'tsardom'.

The external Wisdom fresco of the Dormition Cathedral transforms the Kremlin cathedral into a historical replica of two Hagia Sophia churches: the legendary Hagia Sophia of the first Rome and the actual Hagia Sophia of the second one. This latter identification was due to the fact that both the Constantinople and Moscow Sophia churches were the central cathedrals of their empires: the sites of the imperial coronation ceremonies and the enthronizations of the patriarchs (until 1589 the metropolitans in Moscow), respectively.⁸³ These enthronization ceremonies in

⁸¹ For the Apocalyptic Woman in sixteenth-century Muscovite ecclesiology: Pliukhanova, 'Propoved' na Torzhestvo Pravoslaviia'; Uspenskii, 'Vospriiatie istorii v Drevnei Rusi i doktrina "Moskva—Tretii Rim"', 95–6. See also Chapter 2.

⁸² Cf. Bogatyrev, 'Battle for Divine Wisdom', 358–60; Kriza, 'The Russian Gnadenstuhl', 126–7.

⁸³ For Byzantine coronation ceremonies with further bibliography: I.-A. Tudorie, 'Old and New in the Byzantine Imperial Coronation in the 13th Century', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 60 (2011): 69–109.

Moscow had various references to their Byzantine prototypes, presenting Constantinople as a New Rome.⁸⁴ However, the most explicit link between the Sophia churches of the three Romes was created in the sixteenth-century texts attributed to the Pskovian Monk Filofei, formulating the Third Rome theory. According to this concept, the Muscovite ruler is ‘the tsar and the protector’ of the Church, which Filofei defines as ‘the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church which, instead of the churches of Rome and Constantinople, is now in the holy and glorious Dormition [church] of the most pure Mother of God in the God-protected city Moscow which solely shines brighter than the sun in the universe’.⁸⁵

During the reign of Ivan IV, a new Sophia cathedral dedicated of the feast of Dormition was founded in Vologda (1568). Simultaneously, it also became common for Dormition cathedrals to be regarded as Sophia churches. The appearance of large-scale *Novgorod Sophia* icons in the local tiers of the iconostases in the Dormition Cathedrals of Tikhvin and the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery are witnesses of this striking phenomenon.⁸⁶ The use of Sophia icons in the Dormition cathedrals, much like the appearance of Wisdom iconography in the 1558 Sakkos of Makarii and the external fresco of the Dormition Cathedral, conveyed the Roman ecclesiological idea not only in Moscow, but all over the ‘Rus land’.⁸⁷

The appearance of the Sophia iconography in Moscow after the coronation of the first Russian tsar gave the *Novgorod Sophia* new meaning by representing

⁸⁴ Uspenskii, ‘Vospriatie istorii v Drevnei Rusi i doktrina “Moskva—Tretii Rim”’, 88–92. For the identification of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral with the Constantinople Hagia Sophia see also B. A. Uspenskii, ‘Dualisticheskii kharakter russkoi srednevekovoi kul’tury (na materiale “Khozheniia za tri moria” Afanasiia Nikitina)’, in *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. I: Semiotika istorii (Moscow: Shkola ‘Iazyki russkoi kul’tury’, 1994), 390–1.

⁸⁵ ‘... святѣя вѣселенскѣя апостольскѣя Церкве, иже вмѣсто римьскон и константинопольскон, иже естъ в богоспасенем градѣ Москвѣ святого и славнаго Успения Пречистыя Богородица, иже единая в вѣселенѣи плаче соизца свѣтитсѣя.’ *The letter of Monk Filofei to Misiur Munekhin against Astrologers*, dated to the 1520s. Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim*, 345. For similar formulations in other texts attributed to Filofei, see: Sinitsyna, 345, 348, 352. Cf. Uspenskii, ‘Vospriatie istorii v Drevnei Rusi i doktrina “Moskva—Tretii Rim”’, 100. For a bibliography of the Third Rome theory, see Chapter 10.

⁸⁶ For the sixteenth- to seventeenth-century Sophia icons in Vologda, see Cat. 27 and A. S. Preobrazhenskii, ‘Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhiiia’, in *Ikony Vologdy Kontsa XVI–XVII veka*, ed. L. V. Neresiesian (Vologda and Moscow: Drevnosti Severa, Severnyi palomnik, 2017), 204–18; Preobrazhenskii, ‘Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhiiia i Iavlenie Bogomateri’; A. S. Preobrazhenskii, ‘Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhiiia’, in *Ikony Vologdy XIV–XVI vv.*, ed. L. V. Neresiesian (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2007), 670–7. For the sixteenth-century *Novgorod Sophia* icons on the local tiers of the Dormition Cathedrals: I. A. Shalina, ‘Mestnyi riad ikonostasov Uspenskikh soborov Tikhvinskogo i Troitse-Sergieva monastyrei: Khudozhestvennyi i simvolicheskii zamysel’, *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 8 (2004): 114–27; I. A. Shalina, ‘Ikonostas Uspenskogo sobora Bol’shogo Tikhvinskogo monastyria’, in *Iskusstvo Drevnei Rusi i ego issledovateli*, ed. V. A. Bulkin (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2002), 177–98. Irina Shalina has put forward that the iconographic programmes of these iconostases with Sophia images might have copied those of the iconostases in the Kremlin Cathedrals where new, among others Sophia, icons were installed after the 1547 fire. Shalina, ‘Mestnyi riad ikonostasov’, 117–20.

⁸⁷ For another example of the juxtaposition of the *Novgorod Sophia* and *Dormition* iconographies in the sixteenth-century Trinity icon of the Tikhvin Dormition Cathedral (Cat. 7): I. A. Shalina, ‘Ikona Vekhhozavetnoi Troitsy s deianiiami iz Uspenskogo sobora Tikhvinskogo monastyria: problemy datirovki i interpretatsii’, *Aktual’nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* 9 (2019): 458–71.

Moscow as the descendant of Constantinople, the new Rome. In this new historical context, the concept of *secular primacy*, used in Byzantine anti-Latin polemics, aided in the legitimization of Ivan's Orthodox state. It was now being utilized by the Russian Church in its struggle not only for an approved autocephalous status but also for the establishment of a new Moscow Patriarchate—which was achieved only after the death of Ivan IV, in 1589.

This is why Priest Silvestr's imprecise reference to Grand Prince Vladimir in the Viskovatyi Affair is so important regardless of its historical anachronism: he names the Kyivan ruler as the commissioner of both the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral and its Sophia icon, painted after a Greek prototype. His testimony, the starting point of this study, connects the *Novgorod Sophia* icon with the Russian interpretation of Byzantine *secular primacy* which incorporated with the Muscovite concept of succession. The foundations of the idea of being Moscow the successor of Vladimir the Great's 'Rus Land' and that of the Byzantine church were first laid out in Vasilii II's anti-Florence letters. The Muscovite rulers serve as the heirs to Byzantine emperors in their role as guardians of the Church's Orthodoxy—the protectors of the Hagia Sophia. The words of Silvestr reveal that, together with the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, the Novgorodian clerics also exported the long-standing traditions of Novgorodian anti-Latin visual polemics to Muscovy where they took on a new relevance in the service of the new Orthodox 'tsardom'.

Conclusions

Towards the Viskovatyi Affair

This study proposes that the *Novgorod Sophia* image represents the Orthodox Church, the Church of Hagia Sophia, as it was perceived in fifteenth-century Rus. The icon, together with its contemporaneous commentary, was both a visual and textual response to the Union of Florence between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, a decree which was signed in 1439 but rejected by the Russians in 1441. The Wisdom iconography was created for the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral and the commissioner of the image was Evfimii II, Archbishop of Novgorod, whose patronage shows a clear change of direction after 1439, or shortly before it. Since the Church Union was a highly sensitive issue which caused confusion and a very difficult situation within the Rus Church and especially in Novgorod, we have no empirical evidence regarding to the circumstances of the creation of the Sophia iconography. However, this study uses various philological, iconographic, theological, and historical considerations in support of its argument. The multidisciplinary research reveals the ecclesiological message and the anti-Latin tenet of the Wisdom icon which acquired a new meaning in the historical context of the Union of Florence and the subsequent endeavours of the Russian Church for autocephalous status.

The aim is not only to clarify the meaning, function, and the circumstances of the creation of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon but also to highlight the significance of anti-Latin visual polemics in the history of art of Rus. For the first time, this study shows and highlights the relevance of the Florentine Union from the perspective of the history of medieval Russian painting. The fact that the earliest Sophia commentaries have survived in manuscripts which bear witness to an intense literary activity in the second half of the fifteenth century indicates that the artistic processes discussed in this study have a wider context. It cannot be coincidental that the early history of the commentary is connected with the most prominent figures of fifteenth-century Russian literature, Pachomius the Serbian and the Monk Efrosin.

It is argued that the problem of allegory in medieval Russian art and especially the allegorical representations of God are inseparable from the visual expressions of those theological doctrines that were the focal points of the conflict with the Latins. This conflict centred on three points: (1) ecclesiology; (2) Eucharistic teaching; and (3) triadology (regarding the *Filioque* in the Western Creed).

Two of these points are investigated in this study: ecclesiology and Eucharistic teaching. Ecclesiology is particularly significant as patristic allegorical exegesis was developed precisely on the ecclesiological-allegorical images of the Bible. We have seen how Origen's second-century exegetical principles, elaborated on the example of the Song of Songs, determined indirectly the iconography of the *Novgorod Sophia*. This Alexandrian tradition of biblical exegesis profoundly influenced patristic literature and liturgical poetry. The medieval Russian theory of allegory, however, also had further sources. Along with the decisive Slavonic *Corpus Areopagiticum*, John Chrysostom's *Sermon on Eutropius* (in Slavonic: *Homily on "The queen stood at your right hand"*), a compendium to medieval ecclesiology, contains an early and lengthy, but overlooked discussion of this question.¹ Here John explains why allegory is necessary to express the truth about God in a language that is accessible for human comprehension: 'He does not appear as he is, but in a manner accessible to the viewer. This is why he appears old, then young, sometimes in the fire, sometimes in the cold, in the wind or the water, or dressed in armour. He does not thereby change his nature, but adapts his features to the different persons to whom he appears.'²

In the Viskovatyi Affair, this passage was Metropolitan Makarii's ultimate argument in favour of the symbolical representation of Christ in icons. Although John Chrysostom did not discuss the problem of artistic representations and Makarii's argument evidently conflicted with Byzantine icon theology which maintained that only the incarnated Christ can be depicted, the argument was an indication not of Makarii's ignorance, but rather of the Russian Church's demand to visualize theological messages in icons through the use of symbols and allegories.³

All these conclusions imply that a relevant subject for future research is whether and how the icons disputed by Viskovatyi can be fitted into these three major anti-Latin topics. The analysis of the later history of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon has demonstrated that, following the Union of Florence, anti-Latin polemics became the tool of self-legitimization of both the Moscow Metropolitanate and the emerging Moscow state. Accordingly, one of their visual manifestations, the *Novgorod Sophia* icon, was appropriated by Moscow and integrated into its own iconographic traditions. This process started at the time of Metropolitan Makarii who was previously the Archbishop of Novgorod. Therefore, Silvestr's account of the *Novgorod Sophia* icon is now perfectly clear. He links this icon with the

¹ *Homilia de capto Eutropio*, CPG 4528. For a bibliography, see Chapter 5.

² Bodianskii, 'Rozysek ili spisok', 21–2; Bodianskii, 'Moskovskie sobory', 14. Translation by A. Gythiel: Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 1992, II:311. The same quotation is present in Iosif Volotskii's *Enlightener* in support of the representation of the Holy Trinity. Kazakova and Lur'e, *Antifeodal'nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi XIV-nachala XVI veka*, 373. See Chapter 2 and Kriza, 'Legitimizing the Rublev Trinity'.

³ Sarab'ianov, 'Simvoliko-allegoricheskie ikony', 201. See the Introduction.

Baptism of Rus, i.e. Christianity, with the establishment of ecclesiastical hierarchy and with Grand Prince Vladimir, the first Russian 'tsar,' respectively. These things make up three pillars of the ecclesiology of the New Rome appropriated by the Russian Church and then utilized against the Patriarchate of Constantinople itself. In Silvestr's narrative, both the Russian Hagia Sophia church and the *Novgorod Sophia* icon are symbols of Orthodoxy. A paradox of this icon is that by attempting to depict the Church and its true faith, the Sophia icon challenged another symbol of Byzantine Orthodoxy: icon theology. As a result, this icon, together with other allegorical images, became a stumbling block, not only in the mid-sixteenth-century Moscow but to this day. This paradox was unintentionally admitted by Silvestr himself by maintaining that these icons are 'not to scandalize the world, but to confirm Orthodoxy'.⁴

⁴ 'НЕ НА СОБЛАЗНЪ МІРУ, НО ВО УТВЕРЖДЕНІЕ ПРАВОСЛАВІЮ' Bodianskii, 'Moskovskie sobory', 21.

APPENDIX

Critical Edition of the Sophia Commentary with English Translation

The critical edition of the Sophia commentary is based on five manuscripts from the fifteenth century. The manuscripts and their sigla in the critical edition are as follows:

- N GPNTB SO RAN, collection of M. N. Tikhomirov, no. 397, ff. 124r–126r (1450s or after 1456 on the basis of watermarks; North Rus); first redaction; contains sections I, II, and III.¹
- C GIM, collection of the Chudov Monastery, no. 320, ff. 341r–342r (mid-fifteenth century; its possessor: German, hegumen of the Novospasskii Monastery in Moscow, between 1467 and 1482). Second redaction; contains sections I and III.²
- S RNB, collection of the Solovki Monastery, no. 807/917, ff. 401r–403r (late fifteenth century); second redaction; contains sections I and III.³
- T RGB, collection of the Holy Trinity-St Sergii Lavra, 122, ff. 147r–149r (1491–4; its possessor: Metropolitan Zosima); second redaction; contains sections I and III.⁴
- K RNB, collection of the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery, no. 22/1099, ff. 220v–221r (1470s), third redaction; contains sections I and II.⁵

The Content of the Sophia Commentary

The Sophia commentary consists of three sections (I, II, III) of which section I is the icon commentary in its strict sense, section II is a passage with the incipit *The Seal of Virginity* (Печати девства); and section III is known from other manuscripts as an independent text, entitled *The Fountain of Wisdom* (see Chapter 2). Only *N* contains all the three sections. *CST* have sections I and III, whereas *K* has sections I and II. Apart from the shared quotations from the *Tolkovaia Sluzhba* in both sections I and II (see Chapter 2), the layout of these sections in the manuscripts also suggests their cohesion, therefore they have been included in the critical edition of the Sophia commentary.

¹ Itkin, 'Postateinoe opisaniie'; V. V. Itkin, 'Obzor sostava sbornika GPNTB SO RAN, Sobr. M.N. Tikhomirova, № 397, ser. 15 veka', accessed 3 June 2020, https://nsu.ru/classics/dionysius/itkin_3sb.htm; Itkin, 'Tolkovaniia Afanasiiia'; M. N. Tikhomirov, *Opisaniie Tikhomirovskogo sobraniia rukopisei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 120–2.

² On the basis of watermarks, Protas'eva dates the manuscript to the first half of the fifteenth century: T. N. Protas'eva, *Opisaniie rukopisei Chudovskogo sobraniia* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe Otdelenie, 1980), 187–8. Artsikhovskii dates the text of the commentary to the mid-fifteenth century, referring to Sedelnikov and Shchepkina: Artsikhovskii, 'Izobrazheniia na novgorodskikh monetakh', 106.). For an edition of the text: Nikol'skii, 'Sofia, Premudrost' Bozhiiia: Novgorodskaia redaktsiia ikony i sluzhba sv. Sofii', 79–81.

³ A. A. Alekseev, 'K istorii russkoi perevodcheskoi shkoly XII veka', *TODRL* 41 (1988): 157, 184; Arkhangel'skii, *Tvoreniia ottsov tserkvi*, I:146–60.

⁴ Grigorenko, 'Ideia Sofii v drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti'; Hieromonk Arsenii, *Opisaniie slavianskikh rukopisei biblioteki Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi lavry*, vol. I (Moscow: Tip. T. Ris, 1878), 89–90.

⁵ Novikova, 'Kodikologicheskoe izuchenie sbornika Efrosina Kir.-Bel. 22/1099', 3–37; Pliukhanova, 'Stikhi o Sofee', 385. For a full bibliography: 'Euphrosynus Manuscripts—Fifteenth-Century Miscellanies', accessed 5 June 2020, <http://expositions.nlr.ru/EfrosinManuscripts/eng/project.php>.

The Context of the Sophia Commentary

The context of the Sophia commentary is the same in *N*, *C*, *S*, and *T* (see Table 1) where it is not unequivocal where the commentary ends and the subsequent entries start. In *N*, section III is distinguished by an initial, section II is not, while the subsequent entry (ЕЗДАРА РЕЧЕ О МУДРОСТИ) is separated with letters in red. In *CST*, there are no sign of distinguishing between sections I and III whatsoever (they do not contain section II), whereas the subsequent entry is likewise separated with red. In *K*, there is no distinguishing between sections I and II either, but a marginal 'the end' (КОНЕЦ) word, written later in the middle of the last sentence of section I, signifies the process whereby the last sections separated from the commentary. In the sixteenth-century versions of the commentary, there is section I only and sections II and III, as well as the satellite texts are missing.

Dating and Localization of the Sophia Commentary

N is the oldest manuscript of the Sophia commentary. The watermarks indicate that it was created after 1456, while palaeographical evidence suggests that the manuscript was written in the mid fifteenth century, presumably still in 1450s. Its errors and corruptions show that *N* follows an earlier prototype (see below). On linguistic basis, Itkin localized *N* to North Rus, that is, presupposedly to the Novgorod region.

Although based on watermarks, Protas'eva dated the manuscript of the Chudov Monastery to the first half of the fifteenth century, it cannot be earlier or significantly earlier than the Novosibirsk manuscript: both the arrangement of the ten entries around the Sophia commentary (see Chapter 3 and Table 1) and its text shows that the Novosibirsk manuscript preserves the earliest stage of the development of the text and its context.

Following the dating of *N* and *C*, the *terminus ante quem* of the creation of the commentary is 1450s. Section III which is also known as a separate text, *The Fountain of Wisdom*, in two fifteenth-century manuscripts (Sof. 1262, f. 10r–10v; Mazur. 640, f. 357r–357v), provides a *terminus post quem* for the commentary (see also Chapter 2). While the earlier and shorter version of *The Fountain* (in Mazur. 640) contains quotations from the older Preslav translation of *The Ladder* (cf. старѣшаго молитвенни покровъ in the Preslav translation; vs. настоѣшаго молитвенни покровъ in the Athonite translation), the younger version in the early-fifteenth *Trifonov Collection* (Sof. 1262) and the Sophia commentary have an addition with a citation from the Athonite translation which disseminated in Novgorod in the early fifteenth century (Athonite translation: что добро или... красно... еже жити брати вкупе; vs. the Preslav translation: кол добро и что красно... еже жити брати въ себѣ). This suggests that the commentary cannot be any earlier than the early fifteenth century.

That the commentary was created in Novgorod is indicated by three facts: (1) the provenance of the Novosibirsk manuscript which shows North-Russian distinguishing features; (2) the presence of the new version of *The Fountain of Wisdom* in the manuscript of the Novgorodian hieromonk, Trifon Skiman (see Chapter 2); (3) finally and most importantly, the contemporaneous ten-line inscription in the fifteenth-century local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral which contains the text of the commentary (see Cat. 3). Undoubtedly, once this text will be legible, this will be a fundamental addition to the textual history of the Sophia commentary. All other fifteenth-century manuscripts of the Sophia commentary were copied outside

Sophia commentary, Tikh 397, f. 125v	<i>The Ladder</i> , Rum. 198, 23r (Popova 2007, 183; Preslav translation)	<i>The Ladder</i> , MDA 152, 28v–29r (Athonite translation)
Брони желѣзны— терпѣние и кротость; . . . Шлем спасенїа—зборныа молитвы; реч [Мечъ CST] духовныи—слово Бжие: ѿрѣзаа имъ всю свою волю	Мечъ же дѣховныи въздвигуѣе виноу и всякоу свою волю . . . ѿсѣкающе брѣнїа же желѣзны кротости и терпѣнна обзлчени . . . имоуѣ же и шлемъ спасенна— <u>старѣшиаго</u> мѣтвѣныи покровъ . . .	Мечъ же дѣховныи вынѣ въздвигѣѣе и всѣкѣ своа вола . . . ѿсѣкаѣе въ брѣна же желѣзны кротости и трѣпѣнїа обзлчени . . . имат же и на главѣ шлемъ спасенїа <u>настоѣщаго</u> мѣтвѣныи покровъ . . .
<i>Fountain of Wisdom</i> , Mazur. 640 (Vershinin 2019, 206)		
Броня желѣзны—кротость и терпѣнїе . . . шлемъ спасенїа— <u>старѣшиаго</u> молитвенныи покровъ, щитъ—вѣра, мечъ духовныи—слово Божье: отрѣзаемъ всю свою волю . . .		
Sophia commentary, Tikh 397, f. 126r	<i>The Ladder</i> , Rum. 198, 37r (Popova 2007, 216; Preslav translation)	<i>The Ladder</i> , MDA 152, 45v (Athonite translation)
Все бо красное Давидъ под небесемъ испытавъ послѣ недовѣдныи глаголаше се: <u>что добро или</u> [и коль CST] красно еже жити брати <u>вкупѣ</u>	Ѣлма вса краснаа вса подъ нѣсьмь дѣдъ испытавъ, послѣже въ сего недовѣдныи глше се: кол добро и что красно ни что же нъ еже житї брати <u>въ себѣ</u>	Понеже всѣ краснаа таже под небесемъ Давидъ испытавъ, послѣжде всѣхъ недовѣдныи глаголаше се: ни нѣ <u>что</u> <u>добро или</u> что красно ни что же нѣ еже жити братїи <u>взкупѣ</u>

Box 1. Quotations from *The Ladder* in the Sophia commentary and *The Fountain of Wisdom*

Novgorod in the second half of the fifteenth century or at the end of it. The new, third redaction of the commentary was created in the Kirill-Belozersk Monastery in 1470s.

The Recensions of the Sophia Commentary in the Fifteenth Century

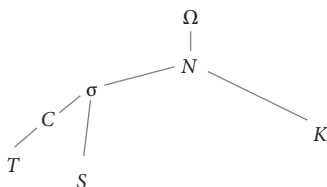
The fifteenth-century manuscripts of the Sophia commentary can be grouped into three recensions.

N is the first redaction of the Sophia commentary which shows the earliest phase of its textual history. Nevertheless, the mistakes and misspellings in *N* also indicate that it copies an older text which was not fully comprehensible or legible for the copyist, for example: БОЖЕСТВЕНАА ДЕВСТВА (instead of ДЕЙСТВА); ЗВОРНЫА МОЛИТВЫ РЕЧЕ ДУХОВНЫИ (instead of ЗВОРНЫА МОЛИТВЫ; МЕРЬ ДУХОВНЫИ).

CST constitute the second recension: their text is clearly closer to *N* than that of *K*. The variant readings of *CST* are very similar, but especially close are those in *C* and *T* (cf. слова во есть мудрость instead of глава во есть мудрость).

K is the third recension. There are many peculiarities which are present only in *N* and *K*. Most importantly: сню же возлюбн чистоту юан Богослов and крилѣ ж орли that are missing from *CST*. Nevertheless, *K* has a series of innovations, missing from the other manuscripts, which were taken over by the later versions of the commentary. Most important of these is surely the incipit of the text: Церкви Бѣга Софїа Пречиста Дѣа Бѣа, сн речъ дѣвственыхъ дѣша.

The interrelation of the manuscripts is described by the following stemma:



Box 2. The stemma of the fifteenth-century manuscripts of the Sophia commentary

The critical edition consists of two texts:

Text N is based on *N* and contains the variant readings of *C*, *S*, and *T* (constituting the second redaction), as well as the quotations and textual parallels.

Text K is the transcription of *K*. Since this third redaction constituted the basis of the development of the Sophia commentary in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries, it seemed straightforward to provide it as a separate text.

Text N

Слова избрана ѿ мног книг вопросов и отвѣтов различных строк

I

Неизреченнаго дѣтва чѣота смиренна мудрѣти истина имѣет бо над главою Хѧ – глава бо есть мдрѣть Снѣ Слово Бжїе. 5
 Простерта бо небеса выпрь Господа – приклони бо небеса и сниде въ дѣву. Елико бо их любат дѣтво, подобатса Богородици. Сиа бо возлюбї дѣтво и руди гѧ їс хѧ, Слово Бжїе. Любяще бо дѣтво ражает слова дѣтелнаа, рекше 10
 неразумныа научают. Сно же возлюби юан прѣча, и крести гѧ їс хѧ, устав же бо дѣтва показат житие обзѣ жестко. Сно же возлюби чѣоту юан Богослов, и сподоби возлежи на перси Гнѧ и быти ему оученикѣ возлюблен. Имат же дѣтво лице девиче огнено – огнь есть Божество, попалаа страсти тлѣнныа, 15
 просвѣщаа же душу чисту. Имат же над оушима торока еже агглы имут – житие бо чисто со агглы равно есть, тороци бо есть покоице Стго Дхѧ. На главѣ же вѣнец еи царскыи – смиренна бо мдрѣть царствует страсти.

5] cf. Eph 5:23 | cf. 1 Cor 1:24 6 /7] Ps 17:10, Ps 143:5 6 /7] cf. 1 Oct. (Pokrov), orthros, canon (Gordienko 1983, 320): Преклонивый Небеса в Тя, Дево, вселися; Epist. against the Romans (Popov 1875, 195): Преклонивъ небеса сходитъ 7 /8] Lit. comm. (Afanas'eva 2012, 388): и тогда подыащи поють, кепанзту – се оубо еже діаконъ възгласитъ поущение къ дѣвственному житїю. Елико въ их рече любятъ дѣвство, подобатса Бци 11] Lit. comm. (Afanas'eva 2012, 375-6): Прѣжде Христова пришествїа мукы претрзгыша и крѣвтною дѣтелїю, и жестоко прѣбыванїемъ житїа... и жестоко прѣбыванїемъ житїе дѣвственное исправивше... само бо Гѣ собою намѣ, дѣства законъ оуствави... и аггльское житїе подражавше 12] cf. John 21:20 14] Lit. comm. (Afanas'eva 2012, 376): Кадильница есть члѣство хѣб, а огнь бжѣство, блгооуханїе же дыма стїи дхѣ, блгооуханное веселїе, а среди кадильницы ложесна дѣла носивши бжїи оугль хѧ

1 – 2 Слова – строк] Слово Святаго Юанна Златоустаго ѿ Прїдрости Бжїей N^{margin}, Слово о Прїмудрости add. CST 5 глава] слова СТ | есть] емоу add. Т 8 гѧ їс хѧ | їсѣ хѧ и гѧ S, їс хѧ гѧ С 8–9 Слово Бжїе] om. CST 11 бо] om. CST | обзѣ] om. CST 11–12 Сно же возлюби] om. CST 16 со агглы равно] равно съ агглы S 18 царствует] со add. N

Сан бо еа препоясан въ чресла – образ старшинства стигелства 20
являет.

В руцѣ же держаще скипетръ – властительскїи сан. Крилъ
ж орли огнени – высокопаривое пррѣтво и разум скоръ являет.
Зелѡ богорачнаа сїи птица любящїи дѣвство и мдрѣтъ, егда
видит ловца выше възлѣтает, сице и любящїи дѣтво неудобъ 25
уловении будут ѿ ловца диавола.

В шуици же имат свиток написан в немъ же написаны
недовѣдомыя сокровенныя тайныи рекше преданаа писаниа.
Видети недостижена бо суть божественаа действия ни аггелом
ни человерком. 30

Удѣнїе свѣта и престолъ, на немъ же сѣдит – оного будущаго
свѣта покои являет.

Утвержена седми со столпов – Седмина духъ дарованїа.

Нѡзѣ же имат на камени – рече хѣ на сем бо камени сззжю 35
церквь мою, и пакы на камени мя вѣры утверди.

II

Печати дѣтва невредив ѿ девы родї гѣ да почитеться
дѣтво, яко дѣтво превыше брака есть и многочестїе. Елико
бо аггли члкъ выше есть и елико ѿ земля до небеси, толико не
оженивыиса выше женившася; дѣтво девствует аггелское
житие со аггелы считается. Тѣмъ же разумѣите дѣвственици 40
и любящїи дѣтво, живущїи во чистотѣ и цѣломудрии и в
говѣанїи: не скорбите иноци обѣщавши дѣтвовати, нъ паче

24–25] Ephr. Syr., *Serm. Ios.* (Sobornik 1647, f. 255v): Онъ же видѣвъ множество
беззастѣдства жены тол, напрасно вперед, дѣвїе истече, вставль ризу свою в рукоу еа, и
сломаъ вса сътъ дїаволи. какоже нѣкїи други орелъ, егда оузрит ловца, то высоко
возлетаетъ, такоже и юсиф извѣжа ѿ сети 34 /35] Matt 16:19 35 35] *Irmos, 2nd*
tone: На камени мя вѣры утвердивъ, разширилъ еси уста моя на враги моя 36 /40] *Jos.*
Vol., Enlight., 11 (Iosif 1857, 460) 37 /39] *Chrys., De virg.*, PG 48, 540 39 /40]
Lit. comm. (Afanas'eva 2012, 378): дѣтво во съ аггелы сзътваетъ любящим а

20 – 21 старшинства стигелства являет] стигелскїи CST 22 же] *om.* CST 23 орли]
om. CST 24 сїи] *om.* CS | птица] пица CST, пти *C^{margin}* | дѣвство и] *om.* CST
26 будут] бывають CST 28 недовѣдомыя] недовѣдовѣдомыя S 29 во] *om.* ST |
действия] дѣтва N 33 Утвержена – дарованїа] *om.* CST | столпов] столков N 34 рече
хѣ] *om.* CST 36 – 46 Печати – Духом] *om.* CST

радуйтесь причастници великаго свѣта гѣ. Сам бо ныне
 овѣщает: да идеже буду азь, ту и слоуга мои будет. Ему же слава со Отцем и Святымъ Духом. 45

III

А се богатство некончаемо сокровище неистоцаемое в селѣ
 сердечнымъ сокровенно. По реченому, *источникъ запечатлѣн,*
вградъ заключенъ, Соломоньскіе невестыи, *стогъ пшениченъ,* 50
источникъ премудрости ведушимъ влазѣ житие: Злато живо –
 въздержаніе; Сребро – чѣстота; Бисер – слезы; Женюг –
 исповеданіе; Риза чѣстна – нравы блази; Тресны златы –
 любовь и чѣстота; Воня благы – Бжиа словеса; Мѣниста –
 заповѣди многаа исправления; Гривны и чѣпи овы – смиреніе и 55
 покореніе; Месяц – простота со безлобием; Ожерелиа – молчаніе;
 Въстуг – сокращеніе помыслу во дверехъ сердечныхъ бездрѣманна
 стоа; Обрукъ и перстни – страдба и труды ручьни; Оусеразии
 колаца – безгнѣвіе и тихость; Главотязь – вѣдѣніе, чело поклон;
 Вѣнецъ светел – соврешенна любь; Зерцало – совѣсть оцищена, 60
 истинное показаніе, о собѣ

44] *Lit. comm.* (Afanas'eva 2012, 388): да будемъ великому свѣту причастници 45]
 John 12:26 48 /78] *Fountain of Wisdom (Istochnik Premudrosti)*, RNB, Sof. 1262,
 10r-10v 49 /50] Song 4:12 50] Song 7:3 51] Eccl 1:5 51 /70] Andr. Cret., *Serm.*
Laz., 42 (Kotkov 1971, 383): добле бо иже въ нихъ купованіе въдоушимъ добръ жити:
 тоу бо злато живое – въздержаніе, бисери – слезы, каменіе свѣтло – добротини
 дѣлеса, сребро – чистота; риза чиста – нравы добри; воня добрия – Гѣа словеса; тоу
 оутварь окрестъ выа – смирѣніе; знаменіе кажа повиненію, оусеразии же и злата
 мѣниста – многоакаа заповѣди исправленія. А чѣто вамъ по единому наричю
 лзканиа много акы дары, самого насъ чѣща нестьства 53] Ps 44:14 53 /54]
 Meth. Patara, *De Lepra* (MDA 41, f. 143 v, cf. Vershinin 2019, 207): и в первую
 доброту Божию Премудростію приидеть, яко и златыми трѣснъми украсенъ, рекше
 любовию, вѣрою и чистотою 57 /58] *Sc. Par.*, 27 (MDA 152, f. 223r; cf. Vershinin
 2019, 206): Безмязвоу другъ мужественъ нѣкыи и прикрутъ помыслъ, въ дверехъ
 сердечныхъ бездрѣманна стоа

48 неистоцаемое] неистоцимо CS 53 исповеданіе] и *add.* С 55 н²] *om.* Т
 57 молчаніе] момолчаніе С | Въстуг] състоугъ CST 58 Обрукъ] вброучи CS |
 страдба] стратба S 60 поклон] и *add.* Т

познание; Поясъ – цѣломудрие; Сапози – евангелскыи тѣсныи
 путь; Брони железны – терпѣние и кротость; Клобукъ –
 остриженее, знаменее терновнаго вѣнца; Шлем спасенїа –
 зборныа молитвы; Мечъ духовныи – слово Бжїе ѿрѣзаа имъ 65
 всю свою волю; Копїе – крестъ пробадаа лютыа ратоходца;
 Стрѣлы – Фалмы; Хоругви – в смиренїи предъ силу начинаїа;
 Жезлъ в руцѣ – надежда крѣпка; Подпора от стен злат –
 страх Гнѣ; Свѣтилник свѣтел – милость ко всѣм, дары многїа,
 алкание самого естества утѣше, конь скоръ искусенъ. Неделныи 70
 седморичныи круг: мѣзда чѣема – преславное тело и кровь
 Христова. Сей велик иже ничимъ же быв недостаточен и успѣ
 к высотѣ цѣлости. Все бо красно Давидъ под небесем испытав
 послѣ недовѣды глаголаше се: что добро или красно еже жити 75
 брати вкупе. Муж усердъ искусом обрѣтѣ осклбис о сих, а и
 еще ица скорбнѣе, будет ѿ преподобныа печали отвержен; Всему
 рече видѣхъ конецъ, а доброволство бес конца на веки дондеже
 аггели будут и до серафим станут.

62 /63] Matt 7:14 63] Rev 9:9 63 /66] Sc. Par., 4 (Rum. 198, 23r; cf. Popova 2007,
 183): Мечъ же духовныи въздвижуще виноу и всякоу свою волю... ѿбѣсающе
 брзнїа же желѣзныи кротости и терпѣннѣа обзлѣчени... имоуть же и шлемъ
 спасеннѣа – старѣннѣаго молтвннѣаго покровъ 64] Eph 6:17 65] Eph 6:17 66] Merilo Pravednoe (TSL 15, f.
 4v-5r; cf. Vershinin 2019, 207): яко внити на нехранимыа старому лютосердому
 ратохотыцю 73] Merilo Pravednoe (TSL 15, f. 6r; cf. Vershinin 2019, 207)
 Внимайте, учю бо вы, разумныхъ силъ здоровому дѣланнїю, дондеже успѣете к
 высотѣ цѣлости 73 /75] Sc. Par., 4 (MDA 152, f. 45v): Понеже всѣхъ краснаа, таже
 под небесемъ Давидъ испытавъ, послѣжде всѣхъ недовѣды глаголаше се:
 нинѣ что добро или что красно ничто же, но еже жити братїи възкоупѣ 74 /75] Ps 132:1 77] Ps 118:96

64 знаменее] знаманнїе С | спасенїа] глѣ add. N 65 Мечъ] рѣ N | духовныи] и add. T |
 слово Бжїе] от. N имъ] от. T 66 ратоходца] ратоборца СТ 67 начинаїа]
 начинаїаа N 70 алкание] олкание T | скоръ] екоръ N 74 послѣ] послѣди CST |
 или] и коль CST 75 осклбис] осклбиса CST 77 отвержен] соутъ верженъ СТ,
 сотъврженъ S | доброволство] добродѣтельство СТ

Text K

Слово ѡ СВѢТѢМЪ Софїи Премдрѣти Бжїи Іѡанна Златоустаго

I

Церкви Бжїа Софїа Пречиста Дѣа Бѣа, сїи речѣ дѣвственыхъ душа.
 Неизглана дѣтва чѣтога смиренна мдрѣти истина имѣет во над
 главою Хѣ – глава во есть мдрѣти снѣ слово бжїе. Простерта же нѣса 5
 выпрѣ гѣ – преклонѣ нѣса и сниде въ дѣоу чѣоу. Елико во ихъ любат
 дѣтво, подобатса Бѣи. Си во роди гѣ ісѣ Слово Бжїе. Любаци во
 дѣтво раждает словеса дѣтелна, рекше неразѡумна наоучает. Сїю
 же возлюби прѣча крѣль, крести и гѣ. Оуставѣ дѣтва показа жестко
 обѣтъ житїе. Сїю во возлюби чѣтооу Іѡаннѣ Богословѣ, сподовиса 10
 възлеци на перси Гнѣ и быти оучѣнкѣ възлюбленѣ хѣви.
 Имат же дѣтво лицо дѣче огньно – огнь во есть дѣтво,
 попадает страсти телесна, просвѣщаа же дшѡу чѣоу. Имат
 же над оушима торока иже аггѣли имоутѣ – житїе во чисто съ 15
 аггѣлы равно есть, тороци же соутѣ покоице Сѣго Дѣа.
 На главѣ же еи вѣнець царьскыи – смѣренаа мдрѣть царьствоует
 страсти.
 Сан же и прѣпоасанїе въ чресла – вѣраз старѣшиньства и сѣльства 20
 явлаеть.
 В роуцѣ же держжаци скипетрѣ – властительскыи санѣ.
 Крилѣ ѡрлїи огнени – высокопаривое пррѣтво разумѣ скорѣ явлает.
 Зѣлаѡ зрачнаа си птица ловацїи дѣтво и мдрѣть, егда во видит
 ловца выше възлѣтает, тако и любяцїи дѣтво неудоьѣ 25
 оуловленыи бывають ѡ ловца дѣвола.
 В шоуици же иматѣ свитокуѣ написанѣ в немѣ же соутѣ
 недовѣдомыа тайны написаныи – рекше преданаа писанїа
 видети.
 Удѣнїе же свѣта и престолѣ, на немѣже сѣдитѣ – много боудоуцаго
 свѣта покоице явлаеть. 30
 Оутвержена же седмїю столпѣ – седмїю дѡуха дарованїи чѣто во
 исаннѣ пррѣтѣвѣ писано.
 Позѣ же имат на камени – на семь речѣ камени церкѣво мою
 созижю хѣ.

II

Печати двѣва неврѣдивъ ѿ девы родиса гб̄ да поутетса двѣво, ѣко двѣво брака выше есть и много чѣнѣе. Елико аггли члкъ выше есть ѿ земля до нбси, толико и неженїивыиса. Двѣво есть агглаское житїе съ агглы сочтаса. Тѣмъ же разумбите двѣственици и живуцїи в цѣломудрїи и в говѣнїи: не скорбите ино рците, ино радуйтеса причастници великаго свѣта, сам бо ны вѣщалъ есть гб̄: да идеже азъ боуду, тоу и слоуга мои.

English Translation

Selected Words from Numerous Books, Questions- and-Answers and Different Passages: Sermon on Wisdom

I.

The purity of ineffable virginity, the truth of humble wisdom has Christ above the head, as the head is Wisdom, Son, the Word of God.⁶ Stretched out heaven above the Lord—*he bowed the heaven and descended*⁷ into the Virgin. For **those who love virginity become like the Mother of God**,⁸ for she gave birth to the Son. Those who love virginity give birth to words of virtue, that is, they teach the insane. The Baptist loved it, and baptized the Lord Jesus Christ, for in baptizing he showed that the **rule of virginity**—was a **rigorous life** in God.⁹ John the Theologian also loved it and he had become worthy to lean on the breast of the Lord and to be the beloved disciple.¹⁰

Virginity has a virginal face of fire—the **fire is divinity**,¹¹ which consumes corruptible passions and illuminates the pure soul.

Over her ears, she has a ribbon like angels—a pure life is equal to angels; this ribbon is the receptacle of the Holy Spirit.

On her head, she has an imperial crown—humble wisdom reigns over the passions.

A belt is tied around her loins—this is a figure of antiquity and that of the priesthood.

She holds a sceptre—imperial dignity.

She has fiery eagle wings—high-soaring prophecy; this God-seeing bird, loving wisdom, **flies higher as soon as it sees the hunter**.¹² Thus, those who love virginity are hard to catch by the hunter devil.

In the left hand is a scroll on which there are written unknown hidden mysteries, that is inherited writings—it is impossible to see the divine actions for both angels and men.

Garments of light and sits upon a throne—this represents the repose of the future world.

Her legs are on rock—*upon this rock I will build my church*¹³ and by **establishing me on the rock of faith**.¹⁴

II.

The seal of virginity was preserved when the Lord was born from the Virgin, so that virginity will be honoured. For those who do not marry are as superior to those who marry as angels are superior to men or as heaven to earth.¹⁵ Angelic life **connects** the virgins **with angels**. Therefore, understand virgins and those who love virginity and live in chastity and purity: do not grieve monks and those who promised virginity, but rather rejoice as

⁶ I have consulted the English translation of a late shorter version of the commentary by B. Jakim: Florensky 2004, 279–80. Verbatim quotations are highlighted with bold letters, biblical citations are italicized.

⁷ Ps 17:10; Ps 143:5. ⁸ *Lit. Comm.* (Afanas'eva 2012, 388.)

⁹ *Lit. Comm.* (Afanas'eva 2012, 375–6.) ¹⁰ Cf. John 21:20.

¹¹ *Lit. Comm.* (Afanas'eva 2012, 376.) ¹² Ephr. Syr., *Serm. Ios.* (Sobornik 1647, f. 255v.)

¹³ Matt 16:19. ¹⁴ *Irmos*, second tone. ¹⁵ Chrys., *De virg.*, PG 48, 540.

partakers of the great light of the Lord.¹⁶ For now, he himself promises: *‘where I am, there My servant will be also.’*¹⁷ Glory be to him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

III.

And this richness is an endless and inexhaustible treasury, which is hidden in the hiding of the heart: *fountain sealed up, garden enclosed,*¹⁸ *heap of wheat*¹⁹ of the Solomonian bride, *fountain of the wisdom*²⁰ for those who know the blessed life:

Tested clean gold—continen^{ce}; Silver—chastity; Pearls—Tears; Bead—confession; Clean clothing—good morals;²¹ *Golden apparel*—love and chastity;²² Good fragrances—words of the Lord; Necklet—fulfilment of many commandments; Necklaces and those chains—humility²³ and obedience; Moon—simplicity without villainy; Collar—silence; Thong—restrain of thoughts standing at the doors of the heart without somnolence;²⁴ Bracelet and gloves—asceticism and manual labour; Jewel on the forehead—wrathlessness and soft speech; Veil—vigil, earth-low bow by forehead (?); Shining crown—perfect love; Mirror—cleansed conscience, true repentance, self-knowledge; Gird—Virginity; Sandals—*narrow way*²⁵ of the Gospel; *Breastplate of iron—patience and piety*; Cap, tonsure—sign of crown of thorns; **The helmet of salvation—common prayer; *The sword of Spirit—word of God; cutting by it all their own will;***²⁶ Cross—piercing the cruel belligerent;²⁷ *Arrows*²⁸—Psalms; Flags—in humility in front of the power of habits; Sceptre in hands—strong hope; Pillar for golden walls—fear of God; Lightning candle—mercy to everyone **many benefits of fasting, teaching us by its very nature.**²⁹ Fast, experienced horse. Uninterrupted seven-radius sphere: awaited reward—glorious flesh and blood of Christ.

This is a magnitude in which there is no deficiency and which reached the height of perfection.³⁰ For David, having tried every pleasure under heaven, last of all said in bewilderment: *Behold, what is good, or what is beautiful? Nothing else but that brethren should dwell together in unity.*³¹ Zealous man gets smile over the temptations and even if he seeks for suffering, his pious sorrow will be abolished; *I have seen*—as it is said—*an end of all,*³² but virtue is without ending, for ever, as long as angels will be and seraphim exist.

¹⁶ *Lit. Comm.* (Afanas’eva 2012, 388.) ¹⁷ John 12:26. ¹⁸ Song 4:12. ¹⁹ Song 7:3.

²⁰ Eccl 1:5. ²¹ Andr. Cret., *Serm. Laz.*, 42. (Kotkov 1971, 383.)

²² Methodius of Patara, *On the leprosy* (cf. Vershinin 2019, 207.) with quotation from Ps 44:14.

²³ Andr. Cret., *Serm. Laz.*, 42. (Kotkov 1971, 383.)

²⁴ *Sc. Par.*, 27. (MDA 152, f. 223r; Vershinin 2019, 206.) ²⁵ Matt 7:14.

²⁶ *Sc. Par.*, 4 (Rum. 198, 23r; Popova 2007, 183.) with quotations from Rev 9:9; Eph 6:17.

²⁷ *Merilo Pravednoe.* (TSL 15, f. 4v–5r; cf. Vershinin 2019, 207.) ²⁸ Eph 6:16.

²⁹ Andr. Cret., *Serm. Laz.*, 42. (Kotkov 1971, 383.)

³⁰ *Merilo Pravednoe.* (TSL 15, f. 6r; Vershinin 2019, 207.)

³¹ *Sc. Par.*, 4 (MDA 152, f. 45v.), with quotation from Ps 132:1. ³² Ps 118:96.

Table 1 The ‘Sophiological Block’ in the four manuscripts of the first and second redactions

Title/incipit	Tikh. 397 1450s	Chud. 320 mid- fifteenth century	TSL 122 1491–4	Sol. 807 late fifteenth century
Inc. В святеи Софен есть комара Соломона (<i>The Legend of Solomon's Chalice</i>)	1. 105r–105v	4. 343v–343r	150r–150v	403v–404r
Inc. Соломон рече. В песни песнем 60 цариць (<i>Pandects of Antiochus: Song 6:7</i>)	2. 105v	5. 343r–344v	150v	404r
Inc. Инако рече. Да поицют царю (<i>Pandects of Antiochus: 1 Kgdms 1:3</i>)	3. 105v–106r	6. 344v	151r	404r
Inc. И пророк рече, на распутни глас его не услышитя, кости скрушеныи не преломи (<i>Isa 42:2–3; 53:7</i>)	4. 106r–106v	7. 344v	151r	404r
Inc. По нашему же постижению 60 цариць (<i>Pandects of Antiochus</i>)	5. 106v–107v	8. 344v–345v	151v–152v	404v–405v
Видение Иоса царя сына Ахазова, иже царствовавшего во Израили (<i>Dream of king Jehoash</i>)	6. 107v–109r	9. 345v–347r	152v–155r	405v–407r
Святаго Григориа слова избранна (<i>Selected Words of Gregory the Theologian</i>)	7. 109r–124r 251r 275r–286v	10. 347r–380r	155r–195r	407r–435v
Словеса избранна от мног книг вопросов и ответов различных строк (<i>Commentary on Sophia</i>).	8. 124r–126r	1. 341r–342r	147r–149r	401r–403r
Inc. Печати девства невредив (<i>Seal of Virginity</i>)	125r	-	-	-
Inc. А се богатство (<i>Fountain of Wisdom</i>)	125r	341v	148r	402r
Inc. Ездра рече о мудрости: Господь созда премудрость и подая любящим ю	9. 126r–126v	2. 342r–343v	149r–149v	403r
Inc. Соломон рече. Сыне моих закон не забывай, глаголы же моя да соблюдают сердце твое (<i>Prov 3:1–7</i>)	10. 126v	3. 343v	149v	403v

Table 2 The ‘Sophiological Synthesis’ of the *Novgorod Sophia*

Six layers of Ecclesiology	Six layers of Ecclesiological iconography	Combination of Ecclesiology and Sophiology	The purpose of the ‘Sophiological synthesis’
The Church as the Bride of Christ in wedding garment	Soteriological	‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ (Prov 9:10)	to link virtues with the true faith
The Church as the Temple of God	Ecclesiastical	‘Wisdom has built her house/temple and set up seven pillars’ (Prov 9:1) Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and the Slavonic Sophia Churches	to identify the Christian Church with Byzantine Orthodoxy
The Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the Church	Christological	‘Wisdom has built her house and set up seven pillars’ (Prov 9:1) ‘The Lord created me at the beginning of His way’ (Prov 8:22)	to highlight the Orthodox doctrine about the Incarnation of God and to link it with ecclesiology
Theotokos: Personification of the Church	Marian	The temple which has been built by the Wisdom is the Theotokos	to highlight the Orthodox doctrine of deification and to link ecclesiology with anti-Latin polemics
The Body of Christ: Eucharist	Eucharistic	‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed’ (Prov 9:5)	to highlight the Orthodox teaching about the Eucharist
Second Coming of the Bridegroom/ Wisdom	Eschatological	‘Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1 Cor 1:24)	to link salvation with Byzantine Orthodoxy

Catalogue: The Iconography of the *Novgorod Sophia* in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

This catalogue contains the published examples of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in all media (icons, murals, manuscripts, textiles, metallic works, etc.). It is not comprehensive for the second half of the sixteenth century; in particular, the Sophia images of the *Illustrated Chronicle Compilation*, some icons from Tretyakov Gallery and private collections with an uncertain dating have not been included.¹ The sequence of the images roughly follows their current accepted dating. In almost all cases, these are based on stylistic analyses, the validity of which has not been assessed here. Apart from some basic information (title, measurements, location, provenance, inscriptions), the catalogue gives a bibliography, contains all historical evidence (if any), provides information about the dating(s) of the images and few iconographic details.

This catalogue has made possible to follow the historical development of *Novgorod Sophia* iconography until the end of the sixteenth century and to distinguish its main types. Finally, it gives some essential information about the genesis of this iconography.

General Iconographic Characteristics

The *Novgorod Sophia* iconography follows a three-figure Deesis composition: the winged, beardless, crowned figure of Sophia is seated on a throne, with the standing Mother of God on her right and John the Baptist on her left. Above Sophia, the bust of the blessing adult Christ is depicted. Both Sophia and Christ are respectively surrounded by a circular aureole (excl.: 4, 25, 28, 29, 30). The composition is crowned by a segment of heaven with a backless Prepared Throne (*Hetoimasia*) in the centre, flanked by angels. In the second half of the sixteenth century the so-called Polotsk-type of Sophia iconography appeared (25, 26) with its distinguishing features which are described below.

Sophia has a red face and wears a red tunic with a golden, bejewelled collar over her shoulder and a likewise decorated loros. The free end of the loros hangs on the left forearm of Sophia, holding a rolled-up scroll. In her right, there is a sceptre (different arrangements of Sophia's hands: 4, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28). Until the mid-sixteenth century, the red wings of Sophia are usually at rest behind her (Sophia with flying wings: 24, 29, 30). Sophia has an open crown (excl.: 24), long hair and a hairband with two ends swinging to the side (torotsi). Her feet rest on a round stone. Her four-leg throne is backless (throne with back: 18, 24), cushioned by two pillows and held by seven pillars (no seven pillars: 4, 10, 20, 29, 30). Her circular aureole usually consists of three concentric rings. It is sometimes dotted with golden stars and divided by different number of rays of light. Occasionally, she has an almond-shaped aureole (4, 30).

The Mother of God is depicted in her traditional vestments with blue tunic and red maphorion, slightly turning towards Sophia. In later images, she also has a crown (24, 28, 29, 30) and wings (24, 29, 30). In common with John, she stands on a small raised

¹ The Sophia icon from the Zubalov collection (GTG, 12927; Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, vol. II: 38–39, no. 384.) and a polyptych from the Pavel Korin Collection (V. I. Antonova, *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo v sobranii Pavla Korina* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966), 83–84, no. 73; Briusova, *Sofia Premudrosti' Bozhiia v drevnerusskoi literature i iskusstve*, 110.), both in the Moscow Tretyakov Gallery. They have been dated to the second half or the end of the sixteenth century.

rectangular platform. With her both hands she holds either the aureole of Emmanuel-Christ or his bust. Rarely, the bust of Emmanuel hovers over her chest (4, 29, 30). If this the case, her position is different: she is either in orans (4) or in Deesis (29, 30) position.

The youthful Christ in the aureole held by the Virgin is usually depicted in bust, or rarely in full length, enthroned (1, 3, 13, 20, 22). This gloriolate often reflects the iconography of the aureole of Sophia.

John the Baptist is in the customary camel's-hair tunic with an overmantle or a drape hanging on his shoulder and wrapped around his body. His leather scarf on some images is emphasized (8, 11, 21, 27). In later images, he also wears a crown (24, 25, 26) or cap (29, 30) and has wings (24, 25, 26, 29, 30).

There are six types of John's position on the *Novgorod Sophia* images:

1. He turns towards Sophia, whilst his right is extended in the gesture of supplication with open palm outstretched towards Sophia, in common with the Deesis images (2, 20);
2. The same arrangement, but his right blesses Sophia, and his left holds an open scroll (1, 9, 10, 28);
3. He is represented frontally with open scroll in his left and with right hand that is elevated to his chest (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 27);
4. The same frontal disposition, but his blessing right is elevated upward, pointing to Sophia (7, 16, 17, 18, 24);
5. He turns towards Sophia: in his right there is an orb, whilst he holds a sword in his left; on his chest the bust of Emmanuel hovers (29, 30);
6. On the Polotsk-type of Sophia images, he has a similar iconography (with variable details), but he is on the right of Sophia and is balanced by John the Theologian on the left (25, 26).

The verses on his scrolls are John 1:29, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 3:10, John 1: 34, respectively, or their different combinations. Usually, there is no correlation between the position of John and the inscription on his scroll.

Blessing Christ: The Adult Christ above Sophia gives his blessing with his two hands (the so-called episcopal blessing). He is clad in his traditional red chiton and blue himation. Sometimes his vestments are gold (3, 5, 18, 29), or partially gold. His aureole usually partially overlaps that of Sophia, but in sixteenth-century smaller images it rests upon it (9, 10, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29), or rarely (in larger-scale images) is fully separated from Sophia's gloriolate (18, 27). In few icons he has a shared aureole with Sophia (4, 30), or he has no aureole at all (28). The shape of the gloriolate is round, once it is onion-shaped (29).

Hetoimasia, segment of heaven and angels: The segment of heaven is represented as a—usually blue arched—band on the top of the composition with the *Hetoimasia* in the centre, often decorated with stars. On the prepared throne, there is drape upon which lies the Gospel, closed or open to John 7:24 (29). In some cases, a cross is also depicted upon the throne (17, 22) or in a footstool in front of the throne (1). In this latter case, the cross is accompanied by a vessel containing other instruments of the passion.

The throne is flanked by usually six kneeling, adoring angels (three on each side). Nevertheless, their number and arrangement can differ, often corresponding to the size and the shape of the image. In some cases, there are only two angels folding up the segment of heaven (5, 13, 29), sometimes complemented by further angels flanking the bust of Christ (25, 30), the *Hetoimasia* (17), or just flying in the heavens (4).

Types of the *Novgorod Sophia* Iconography until the End of the Sixteenth Century

This survey of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography has demonstrated that the figure of John the Baptist shows the largest variability in the Sophia icons. Based on his position, therefore, we can distinguish six types of Sophia iconographies until the end of the sixteenth century.

1. **Deesis type** (2, 20). This type which shows John's right hand extended in a Deesis gesture towards Sophia is very rare: it appears only in the freshly explored fresco in the Cell of Bishop John in the Novgorod Archiepiscopal Palace from 1441 (2). The small Sophia image in the *Tree of Jesse* icon of the Vologda icon-painter Dionisii Grinkov (18) is a later example, undoubtedly unrelated to the Novgorod fresco.

2. **Liturgical type** (1, 9, 10, 28). On stylistic grounds, the icon from the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral (1) is considered to be the oldest Sophia icon. It depicts John the Baptist with a blessing right, turning towards Sophia. I call this type liturgical, because John's gesture clearly refers to the liturgical commentary which compares the right hand of the archpriest making a sign of cross on the gifts in the Epiclesis with that of John, baptizing Christ in the Jordan (see Chapter 2). Importantly, although the early Kremlin icon was apparently painted not by a Novgorodian icon-painter, this type of Sophia iconography occurs exclusively in icons created in the Novgorod Archbishopric until the end of the sixteenth century (9, 10).

3. **Cathedral type** (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 27). Presumably, the right hand of John raised to his chest is intended to express his 'humble wisdom.' John's gesture of humility is the most popular in the *Novgorod Sophia* icons, obviously because the local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral shows John frontally, in this humble form. John's position of hands might have imitated the similar depiction of Solomon in the drum of the cathedral. There is little doubt that the cathedral's local icon served as prototype for all cathedral-type Sophia images, including those which have been dated to the end of the fifteenth century (4, 5).

4. **Makarian type** (7, 16, 17, 18, 24). A combination of the liturgical and cathedral types can be linked to Makarii who before becoming Metropolitan of Moscow (1542–63) was the Archbishop of Novgorod (1526–42). This type represents John frontally, but in common with the liturgical type, it shows his right hand raised in the gesture of blessing. There is one extant fresco of this type in the Novgorod Archiepiscopal Palace which has been linked to Makarii by Tatiana Tsarevskaya (16).² The iconographic analysis supports this hypothesis, as other examples of this Makarian-type Sophia iconography are from Moscow and can be directly or indirectly connected to Makarii himself (17, 18, 24; excl. 7 which is the work of a Pskov painter). Nevertheless, it is still uncertain when the external fresco of the Dormition cathedral with crowned and winged Theotokos and John (24) was created.

5. **Apocalyptic type** (29, 30). This is a late version of the Sophia iconography, apparently influenced by the Polotsk-type Sophia (see below). It shows both the Mother of God and John with wings and the former with crown and white handkerchief, whilst John wears a cap. The influence of the Polotsk iconography is indicated by the bust of Emmanuel on Mary's and John's chests and by the sword in John's left hand, as well as the orb in his right, reflecting the

² T. Tsarevskaya, 'The Shrines and Saints of Novgorod in the Program of Fresco Decoration of the Archbishop's (Faceted) Palace in the Novgorod Detinets', in *8th International Conference Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art, Moscow, 2–6 October 2018: Abstracts of Communications*, ed. S. V. Maltseva, E. Iu. Stanyukovich Denisova, and A. V. Zakharova (St. Petersburg: NP-Print, 2018), 256–7.

image of Sophia. It is called apocalyptic because of the Virgin's wings (cf. Rev 12:14), and the sword in John's hand, referring to the divine punishment (Rev 2:12; Matt 10:34).³

6. **Polotsk type** (25, 26). In strict sense, this is not a *Novgorod Sophia* any more, but its derivation. It has survived in an icon from the Lviv region of Ukraine (25). Based on the seventeenth-century inventories of the Tobolsk Cathedral we can assume that the local icon of the Polotsk Sophia Cathedral was its prototype which was also copied in the Tobolsk Sophia Cathedral where it was paired with an icon of the *Praise to the Mother of God* (none of these images have survived).⁴

The Mother of God is missing from this image, as she has been replaced by John the Baptist, whilst the Forerunner's original place on the left of Sophia has been taken by John the Theologian (Evangelist). In the Lviv icon, both Johns are winged, crowned and they have the bust of Emmanuel on their chests. They have an orb and a sceptre in their hands. In Muscovy it has not survived as an independent subject, but it was combined with the scenes of the *Elevation of the Panagia* and the *Praise to the Theotokos*, respectively (26). The inventories of the Tobolsk Cathedral, however, suggest that the original Polotsk Sophia depicted the Divine Wisdom only and was paired with the image of the *Praise to the Mother of God* that supposedly also depicted the *Elevation of the Panagia*.

The History of the *Novgorod Sophia* Iconography until the End of the Sixteenth Century

Until the mid-sixteenth century, the Sophia iconography was widespread only in Novgorod and the Novgorod Archbishopric. Its earliest dated example is the fresco in the Cell of Bishop John of the of the Novgorod Episcopal Palace from 1441 (2). Apart from the double-sided icon from the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral, currently dated to the first half of the fifteenth century (1), there is no extant early example of this iconography that was created not by a Novgorodian painter or in Novgorod. The absence of this type of Sophia iconography in central Rus and in particular in Moscow is underpinned by the Viskovatyi affair (1551) which shows that the iconography remained unknown there until the mid-sixteenth century (see Introduction).

Despite this absence of the *Novgorod Sophia* iconography in the art of other regions and schools of Rus until the mid-sixteenth century, there are different theories as to why the supposedly oldest *Novgorod Sophia* icon was not created in Novgorod, but possibly in Tver, Moscow or in their surroundings (see Introduction). All these theories contradict the fact that the allegedly 'non-Novgorod' iconography of the Kremlin bilateral icon was copied only in the Novgorod Archbishopric until the end of the sixteenth century. The close link is especially striking between the Kremlin icon (1) and the icon from the St.-Petersburg Likhachev collection, created undoubtedly in the Novgorod region in the middle of the sixteenth century (9). It might be, therefore, more straightforward to hypothesize that—although it was painted not by a painter trained in Novgorod—the Kremlin Sophia icon was in fact created in Novgorod, or for a Novgorodian commissioner. Otherwise, if this icon with its pioneering iconography had been created not in—or for—Novgorod, it would have had some traces in the art of other regions before the second half of the sixteenth century. But so far, we do not have any.

³ Cf. Preobrazhenskii, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia i Iavlenie Bogomateri', 258.

⁴ Preobrazhenskii, 260.

The first evidence of the Kremlin Sophia icon is an inventory of the Annunciation Cathedral from 1690, which means that the icon was transferred to the Kremlin Annunciation cathedral before the end of the seventeenth century. Most probably, however, the icon left Novgorod during the reign of Ivan IV when numerous icons from Novgorod and other regions of Muscovy were transferred to Moscow's central churches in the Kremlin, following the coronation of the first Russian tsar, Ivan IV in 1547.⁵ It is also plausible that the provenance of this icon was the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral itself, a fact which could have enhanced its importance and served as reason for its selection for the Moscow Annunciation Cathedral, the church of the Moscow rulers.

Based on the available evidence, we should hypothesize that the creation of the large-scale local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (3) was preceded by the depiction of some initial, 'experimental' images, such as the fresco in the Cell of Bishop John from 1441 (2) and the Kremlin Sophia icon (1). The loose correspondence between John the Baptist's position in these two images strengthens this possibility: the vast majority of later images follow the strikingly different frontal 'humble' position of John invented by the icon of the Sophia Cathedral.⁶

The currently accepted dating of the local icon of the Sophia Cathedral is the second half or the end of the fifteenth century, although the palaeography of the inscription on John's scroll suggests an earlier origin, the first half of the same century.⁷ Importantly, there is another ten-line inscription in this icon, coeval to the original painting of the image, which contains the words of the Sophia commentary.⁸ We can only hope that after a more specific investigation, the inscription's newfound legibility might allow textual criticism to contribute to the dating of the icon. From this perspective, the first words of the inscriptions are particularly important. If the incipit follows the first redactions of the Sophia commentary, this will reinforce the palaeographical observations which suggest that the icon was commissioned by Evfimii (1429–58). If it is from the third redaction (as it usually stands in sixteenth-century images: 12, 22), this will modify the date and move it to the period after 1470s, when Efrosin copied his manuscript in the Kirill-Belozersk monastery (no. 22/1099) with the new version of the Sophia commentary (see the Critical edition of the text). The evidence of the *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*, referring to ancient costumes regarding this image in 1510, challenges the assumption that the icon was painted at the time of Archbishop Gennadii (1484–1504). This *ante quem* is supported by two Sophia images from the late fifteenth century or the turn of the century (4, 5) which freely imitate the iconography of the Sophia Cathedral's icon with the humble gesture of John.⁹

There is no doubt that it was Metropolitan Makarii who exported the Sophia iconography to Moscow from Novgorod, by creating a special version of it, characteristic of his commissions (16, 17, 18, 24). The Makarian-type Sophia iconography amalgamates the cathedral- and the liturgical-type Sophia iconographies which might have conveyed a shared reference to the local icon of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (3) and the bilateral Sophia icon (1). This mixed iconography may imply that the later bilateral icon was transferred from Novgorod to the Moscow Kremlin during Makarii's office as metropolitan

⁵ L. A. Shchennikova, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhia; Raspiatie', in *Tsarskii Khram: Sviatyni Blagoveshchenskogo sobora v Kremle*, ed. L. A. Shchennikova, I. A. Sterligova, and Iu. N. Zvezdina (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom Maksima Svetlanova, 2003), 114–16; Kachalova, Maiasova, and Shchennikova, *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia*, 67.

⁶ Cf. Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant', 158; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye osnovy', 475–6.

⁷ Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii variant', 157, note 35.

⁸ Tsarevskaia, 166.

⁹ Smirnova, *Iskusstvo knigi v srednevekovoi Rusi: Litsevye rukopisi Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, 491–2.

of Moscow. Although so far there is no certain dating of the external Sophia fresco of the Kremlin Dormition Cathedral (24), its similarities with the external fresco over the Western entrance of the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral (6), commissioned by Makarii as Novgorodian Archbishop in 1528, suggest a close link between the two frescoes: both Sophia murals constitute a part of a three-element programme in which the central image represents the Holy Trinity. It remains a question, however, whether the innovative details of the Kremlin fresco, including the wings and the crowns of the Mother of God and John, are original or later additions to the sixteenth-century mural. We know that one of Makarii's last commissions was the fresco decoration of the Kremlin Archangel Cathedral, where the apse fresco shows a traditional Makarian-type Sophia iconography (18).

In common with the external fresco on the Dormition cathedral, some late-sixteenth-century small icons from North Russia (29, 30) depict the Theotokos and John with wings and the former with a crown. In addition, these icons absorb a number of distinguishing features from a novel Sophia image that appeared after the second half of the sixteenth century: the sword in John's hand, the bust of Emmanuel on his and the Virgin's chest, as well as the orb in his hand. The appearance of the new apocalyptic elements in the Sophia iconography and the references to the divine punishment might have to do with the Livonian war (1558–1583) and Moscow's ecclesiastical conflict with the Kyivan Metropolitanate.

Based on the inventories of the Tobolsk Sophia cathedral from 1625 and 1636, we can hypothesize that this innovative icon of Sophia was created for the Polotsk Sophia Cathedral, called by these documents 'Polotsk version of the icon of Sophia, Divine Wisdom.'¹⁰ Polotsk, originally in the territory of the Kyivan Metropolitanate, was occupied in 1563 by Ivan IV during the Livonian war and subsequently went under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Moscow for sixteen years when the city was re-captured by the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. There is every indication to believe that the Polotsk Sophia was created during this Muscovite period of the city. An icon from the Lviv region can give an idea of this so-called Polotsk-type icon (25). In Muscovy, however, the independent Polotsk Sophia icon has not survived. Here a combined version appeared which amalgamates three scenes: the *Polotsk Sophia*, the *Elevation of the Panagia* and the *Praise to the Mother of God* (26).

After the second half of the sixteenth century, following Moscow's appropriation of the Sophia iconography, the ancient and novel Sophia cathedrals in Polotsk, Vologda and Tobolsk became the driving forces of the development of the Sophia iconography. But since the cathedrals dedicated to Marian feasts were also perceived as Sophia churches, the seventeenth century saw the wide dissemination of Wisdom imagery in the different regions of expanding Muscovy.

Catalogue

Cat. 1. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* icon, Moscow?, Tver?; Fig. 0.4.

68×54 cm

On the verso: Crucifixion from the nineteenth century.

Location: MMK, Kremlin, Annunciation Cathedral, ж-1413.

Inscription: СѢЛА СОФІА Премудрость БЖІИА

¹⁰ Preobrazhenskii, 'Sofia Premudrost' Bozhii i Iavlentie Bogomateri', 260.

Dating: first quarter of the fifteenth century (Lifshits 2002; Lifshits 2000; Ostashenko 2000; Ostašenko 1999; Ostashenko 1991; Kachalova, Maiasova, and Shchennikova 1990); first half of the fifteenth century (Shchennikova and Gushchina 2019; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye' 2019; Shchennikova 2003); second quarter of the fifteenth century (Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019); third quarter of the fifteenth century (Briusova 2006); mid-sixteenth century (Iakovleva 1977); sixteenth century (Filimonov 1874).

Source:

Inventory of the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral, 1680: Въ киотѣ жъ образъ Софіи Премудрости Слово Божіе; оплечки и поля серебряныя, басемныя, вѣнцы серебряныя жъ, чеканныя, позолочены. На той же дскѣ образъ Распятіе Господа нашего Иисуса Христа; оплечки и поля серебряныя, басемныя, позолочены; пять вѣнцовъ чеканныхъ, да три рѣзные, серебряныя жъ, позолочены. Filimonov 1873, 17.

Iconography: Liturgical type; Emmanuel in full length in the Virgin's aureole; cross and the vessel with the tools of the passion on a footstool in front of the *Hetoimasia*.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29, later addition: Matthew 3:2, 3:10.

Literature: Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019, 159–61; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye', 475–6; Shchennikova and Gushchina 2019, 190–7; Briusova 2006, 82–3; Shchennikova 2003; Gukova 2003, 204–5; Lifshits 2002, 148; Lifshits 2000; Hunt 2000; Ostashenko 2000 (with bibliography); Lifšic 1999; Ostašenko 1999; Ostashenko 1991; Kachalova, Maiasova and Shchennikova 1990, 67; Iakovleva 1977; Filimonov 1874.

Cat. 2. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, fresco in the Novgorod Archiepiscopal Palace; Figs 0.3, 11.4.

The Sophia iconography is flanked by two hierarchs, one of whom has been identified with Nikita, bishop of Novgorod (1096–1108), the other might have been Ioann, archbishop of Novgorod (1165–86). The image of Sophia in the arch was paired with another fresco of which a detail of architectural setting has survived. On the right of Sophia's arch, there is a fragment with a halo and a head which might have belonged to St Euthymius (†473).

Location: Novgorod Archeepiscopal Palace, Cell of Archbishop John.

Dating: between 1434 and 1441 (Sarab'ianov); 1441, the saints are later, possibly mid-sixteenth-century additions (Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye' 2019).

Source:

1441, *Novgorod First Chronicle*, younger redaction: Того же лѣта подписа на бысть полата болшая владычня и сѣни пережнии. Nasonov 1950, 421.

Iconography: Deesis type.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:34.

Literature: Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019, 151–6; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye' 2019; Sarab'ianov 2009. Online catalogue of NGM: <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/409810>.

Cat. 3. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, local icon of the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod; Fig. 0.1.

202×154 cm

Location: St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, main iconostasis, local tier.

Inscription: ten-line inscription with the text of the commentary, incipit so far illegible (Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019, 166).

Dating: second half of the fifteenth century (Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019; Gukova 2003; Gordienko 1984); end of the fifteenth century (Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye' 2019);

Shchennikova and Gushchina 2019; Tsarevskaia 2011; Smirnova 2011; Tsarevskaia, 'Sofia' 2008; Kvilidze 1998); sixteenth century (Solov'ev 1858; Makarii 1860); seventeenth century (Smirnova 1997; Gormin and Yarosh 1984).

Sources:

1510, *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*: князь велики Василии Ивановичъ . . . едучи на Москву также велел свечю неугасимую пред Софиною Премудростию Божию день и ночь, по старинѣ, как была преже. PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 537.

1528, *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*: Тогда же боголюбивый Архиепископъ Макарей и иконы во святѣи Софѣи повелѣ по чину поставити: самую чудную икону святую Софию выше воздвигъ. PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 545; cf. PSRL, vol. VI 1853, 285.

Sixteenth century, *Sophia commentary*: О Софен Премудрости Божии. Списано с местного образа иже в Великомъ Нове Граде. MDA 16, f. 99r.

1554, Sylvestr on the Viskovatyi Affair: Как благочестивый православный и великий князь Владимир сам крестился во имя Отца, и Сына, и Святого Духа в Корсуне, и приехав в Киев, заповеда всем креститися, и тогда вся Руская страна крестися. А в начале из Царяграда в Киев прислан Митрополит, а в Великий Новгород владыка Иоаким. И князь Великий Владимир повеле в Новеграде поставити церковь каменную, святую Софию Премудрость Божию по царяградскому обычаю, и икона София Премудрость Божия тогда ж написана, греческою перевод. *Bodianskii* 1847, 20.

Iconography: cathedral type; the enthroned and blessing Emmanuel in golden vestments is in full length in the Virgin's aureole; Christ in golden vestments.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29, Matthew 3:2, 3:10.

Literature: Tsarevskaia, 'Rannii' 2019, 157–9; Tsarevskaia, 'Programmnye' 2019, 475–6; Smirnova 2011, 490–2; Tsarevskaia 2011, 9–10; Tsarevskaia 2008b; Briusova 2006; Briusova 2000, 394–5; Gukova 2003, 204–5; Kvilidze 1998; Smirnova 1997, 24; Gordienko 1984, 214–15; Gormin and Yarosh 1984; Ignatii 1865, 266; Makarii 1860, vol. II., 68–70; Solov'ev 1858, 50–7.

Cat. 4. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, drawing in the Likhachev Apostol; Fig. 8.6.

Location: St Petersburg, SPbII RAN, coll. 238 (F. P. Likhachev), op. 1, no. 274, f. 7v.

Dating: 1490s—early 1500s.

Iconography: cathedral type; Christ and Sophia are in a shared almond-shaped aureole; Sophia's hands are empty; Sophia's feet rest on a circular stone flanked by winged wheels of the 'thrones'; no seven pillars; the bust of Emmanuel is without aureole on the chest of the Mother of God who is in frontal Orans position; two angels fold up the segment of heaven and two others fly in the air.

Literature: Smirnova 2011, 472–93; Smirnova 1994, 392–415.

Cat. 5. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom icon*, Novgorod.

36×28 cm

Location: private collection (former Provatoroff Collection).

Dating: end of the fifteenth century (Smirnova 2011; Lazović 1975); sixteenth century (Christie's 1997).

Iconography: cathedral type; the bust of Emmanuel without aureole is held by the Mother of God; Christ in golden vestments; two angels fold up the segment of heaven.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29.

Literature: Smirnova 2011, 491–2; Christie's 1997, 48–9 (lot 297; the same: Christie's London, 17 December 1998, lot 264); Lazović 1975.

Cat. 6. *Old Testament Holy Trinity, Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, and Mandylion*, fresco; Fig. 12.3.

Location: St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, exterior fresco over the Western entrance.

Dating: 1528.

Source:

1528, *Novgorod Fourth Chronicle*: Того же лета, весне, повеле преосвященный архиепископ Макарий иконописцем написати настенное письмо на стену у святей Софии над дверми, коими сам входит от запада, и написати выше живоначальную Троицу, а доле святую Софию премудрость Божию, и Нерукотворный образ Господа нашего Иисуса Христа и два архангела по страданиям на поклонение всем православным христианомъ . . . А и преже сего было же написано на том же мѣсте, но только единъ образъ Вседержителя до пояса, а мало не во всё то место, идеже нынѣ настенное писано, но от многих лет обетцало и архиепископ то повеле отъяти, а новие написати. PSRL, vol. IV/I/3 1929, 545–6; cf. PSRL, vol. VI 1853, 285–6.

Iconography: Cathedral type.

Literature: Shalina 2016, 28–32; Orlova 2002, 174, 244–5; Orlova 1990.

Cat. 7. *Old Testament Holy Trinity with 24 scenes*, icon from the Dormition Cathedral, Tikhvin; Pskov school.

172×136 cm

Location: GTG 22380.

Dating: ca. 1515 (Shalina 2019); mid-sixteenth century (Shalina 2004); second half of the sixteenth century (Antonova and Mneva 1963); last quarter of the sixteenth century (Lifshits and Ostashenko 1999).

Iconography: Makarian type; Emmanuel without aureole is held by the Mother of God; Christ in golden vestments; four angels in adoration flank the *Hetoimasia*.

Literature: Shalina 2019; Shalina 2004, 123; Lifshits and Ostashenko 1999, 13; Vzdornov 1981, ill. 50; Antonova and Mneva 1963, vol. II, 44–5, no. 389.

Cat. 8. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* icon, North Russia.

36×30 cm

Location: GTG 12916 (Collection of A. V. Morozov); central image of a partially lost *Deesis* tier. Further two icons of this tier have survived representing St Michael and Peter, as well as St Gabriel and Paul, respectively, currently kept in Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (NMI 251, 252).

Dating: first half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type; the bust of Emmanuel is without aureole on the chest of the Mother of God.

Literature: Osokina 2018, 609–11; Antonova and Mneva 1963, vol. II, 239, no. 660.

Cat. 9. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* icon, Novgorod; Fig. 11.5.

33×27 cm

Location: GRM (Collection of N. Likhachev).

Inscription: С Ками Агѣана Стеѣанова Дружининных/починить с позолотою.

Dating: 1550s–1560s (Shalina 2016).

Iconography: liturgical type; the head of Emmanuel in aureole is held by the Mother of God.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29.

Literature: Shalina 2016, 151, 154–5 (with bibliography); Briusova 2006, 83; Mann 2005, 228–9; Shalina 1995.

Cat. 10. Carved wood triptych with the *Descent of the Holy Spirit, Old Testament Trinity* and *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, Novgorod; Fig. 11.6.

18×39 cm (Sophia panel)

Location: Collection of A. Rastorguev.

Dating: mid-sixteenth century (with nineteenth-century fittings and painting).

Iconography: liturgical type.

Literature: Komashko 2007, 206, no. 138 (ill. on p. 155).

Cat. 11. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, shroud, Novgorod.

41×39 cm

Location: GIM 23227 R.B.—190.

Dating: early sixteenth century (Efimova); middle of the sixteenth century (Katasonova, Petrov).

Iconography: cathedral type.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29.

Literature: Katasonova 2010, 78–80; Petrov 2008, 332–3 (with bibliography); Efimova and Belogorskaia 1982, 221.

Cat. 12. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with St Nicholas, St Nikita, St Antonii and Feodosii of the Caves, church banner (khorugv) from the Church of St Nikita, Novgorod; Fig. 1.2.

48×53 cm

Location: GRM, no. DRT-20.

Inscription: церкви Божия Софѣя пречистая Дева Богородица, имеетъ во надъ главою Христа, простерта же небеса, превыспрь Бога, имать же девство лице дивное огненное, имать же надъ ушима тороце, еже и Ангели имутъ, на главе же.

Dating: 1550s–1560s.

Iconography: cathedral type; John's scroll is closed.

Literature: Shalina 2016, 140; no. 89 (with bibliography); Katasonova 2010, 46–8, Likhacheva 1994.

Cat. 13. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with the *Old Testament Holy Trinity*, saints and symbols of evangelists, shroud from Novgorod.

41×33 cm

Location: VGMZ, no. VOKM 27894/1.

Dating: 1550s–1560s.

Iconography: cathedral type; two angels fold up the segment of heaven.

Literature: Katasonova 2010, 81; Petrov 2008, 142–3, 329–31; Silkin 2005; Silkin 2004; Semechkina 2005.

Cat. 14. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with the *Old Testament Holy Trinity* and saints. Panagia of Archbishop Pimen from the St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod.

17×11 cm

Location: NGM KP 772.

Dating: 1553–70.

Iconography: cathedral type.

Literature: Sterligova, *Dekorativno-prikladnoe* 2008, 419–22 (with bibliography); Petrov 2008, 143; Bocharov and Gorina 1977, 307–308; online catalogue of NGM: <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/99810>.

Cat. 15. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with saints, icon-enkolpion, Novgorod.

10×9 cm

Location: NGM KP 20157.

Dating: sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type; Sophia together with the Mother and God and John are flanked by Archangels Gabriel and Michael; the segment of heaven is flanked by two six-winged seraphim.

Literature: online catalogue of NGM: <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/118847>.

Cat. 16. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, fresco.

Location: Archbishopal Palace, Novgorod.

Dating: seventeenth century, possibly following a sixteenth-century iconography.

Iconography: Makarian type.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29, Matthew 3:2.

Literature: online catalogue of NGM:

<https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/409797>.

Cat. 17. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, central silver plate on the back of the Sakkos of Metropolitan Makarii (paired with the image of the Dormition on the front).

Location: MMK, no. tk–8.

Inscription: благословением отца и сына и святого духа бога нашего в троицы славимого и поклоняемого его же поем и благодарим и превозносим во веки зделан бысть сий святительский сак во святую великую соборную и апостольскую церковь пречистыя и преблагословенныя владычицы нашей богородицы и присно девы марины честнаго и славного ея успения пресвятейшия митрополии богом спасаемого приименитого царствия московского и всея великия россии пресвященному митрополиту макарию и всем прочим митрополитам им же благоволит бог на том превеликом престоле тоя святейшия русския митрополия в роды и роды и во веки повелением благоверного и благочестивого и богом венчанного царя и великого князя иоанна васильевича государя самодержца всея росии в двадесят пятое лето государства его во второе на десять лето святопомазанного царства его и его благочестивым и христоролюбивыя царицы и великия княгини анastasии и благоверных чадих благоверного царевича иоанна и благоверного феодора и благоверныя царевны евдокии в лето 7066 [1558] месяца генваря в 4 д. . .

Dating: 1558; commissioned by Tsar Ivan IV.

Iconography: Makarian type; two angels fold up the segment of heaven and two other angels flank the *Hetoimasia* and the cross on the top of it.

Literature: Vishnevskaja 2012, 72–73; Vishnevskaja 2007, 22–4; Makarii (Veretennikov) 2007 (with illustration); online catalogue of MMK:

<https://collectiononline.kreml.ru/iss2/items?info=55039>

Cat. 18. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* apse fresco; Fig. 12.6.

Location: Archangel Cathedral, Kremlin, Moscow.

Dating: seventeenth century, the iconography is from 1564.

Iconography: Makarian type; four angels adore the *Hetoimasia* and two angels flank the bust of Christ in golden vestments whose aureole is separated from that of Sophia; Sophia has a backed throne; only six pillars.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29.

Literature: Samoilova 2004, 78–83.

Cat. 19. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with 26 scenes of the Gospels, icon from the local tier of the iconostasis of Dormition Cathedral, Tikhvin.

202×161 cm

Location GRM no. DRZh 3236.

Dating 1560s.

Literature Shalina 2004, 117; Shalina 2002.

Cat. 20. Dionisii Dmitriev Grinkov: *Resurrection* and *Tree of Jesse* with the life of Christ and other scenes, icon from the St Elijah Church, Vologda.

127×158 cm

Location: VGMZ no. 10130.

Dating: 1567/1568.

Iconography: Deesis type; Emmanuel in full length in the Virgin's aureole; Sophia's right holds a scroll, her left a sceptre; four adoring angels flank the *Hetoimasia*; blessing Christ in golden vestments.

Literature: Nersesian, 'Voskresenie' 2007.

Cat. 21. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon.

Location: Private collection (former Zeiner-Henriksen collection, Oslo).

Dating: Second half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:34.

Literature: Riabuschinsky 1955, no. III/3.

Cat. 22. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with saints, triptych, Moscow; Fig. 5.1.

122×97 cm (central panel); 121×48 cm (side panels).

Location: GTG no. 19973; 19868; 19869.

Inscription (nineteenth century, possibly originally from the sixteenth century)—incipit: Софiа Церкви Божiа Пречистаа Дева Богородица, сiи речъ дѣвственыхъ дѣша. Неизглаголаннаго дѣства чистота смиренна мудрости истина . . .

Dating: second half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type; the enthroned and blessing Emmanuel in golden vestments is in full length in the Virgin's aureole.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:29.

Literature: *Sofia* 2000, 274–7; *Sophia* 1999, 306–9; Antonova and Mneva 1963, vol. II, 100–1, no. 482.

Cat. 23. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from the Novgorod Antoniev Monastery.

198×145 cm.

Location: NGM, no. KP 7718.

Dating: second half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:34, 1:29, Matthew 3:2.

Literature: online catalogue of NGM: <https://novgorod-iss.kamiscloud.ru/entity/OBJECT/105582>.

Cat. 24. Nazarii Istomin and Leontii Timofeiev: *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, fresco; Fig. 12.5.

Location: Moscow, Kremlin Dormition Cathedral, exterior fresco over the North Eastern apse (over the central apse: *Synthronoi/New Testament Trinity*); over the South Eastern apse: the *Synaxis of the Theotokos*).

Dating: 1626 (iconography possibly from the second half of the sixteenth century).

Iconography: Makarian type; the Mother of God and John have wings and closed crown; Sophia's right holds a scroll, her left a sceptre; Sophia has flying wings and backed throne.

Inscription on John's scroll: John 1:34, 1:29.

Literature: Orlova 2002, 224–5; Orlova 1990, 210–11; Briusova 1985; Uspenskii 1902, 47–70.

Cat. 25. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* from the church of the Mother of God, Busovys'ko, Lviv region; Fig. 12.8.

64×79 cm

Location: Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum, Lviv, no. NML-14714, i-1519.

Dating: second half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: Polotsk type; the *Hetoimasia* is replaced by the image of the Ancient of the Days above the dove, the symbolical image of the Holy Spirit. The dove is depicted over the bust of Christ who blesses only with his right hand, whilst his left holds a book. Two angels fold up the segment of heaven, four further angels flank Christ above Sophia; Sophia's right holds a cross-mounted cross, her left is empty; the two Johns have cross-mounted sceptre and orbs in their hands; five apostles are represented on each side of the composition; the stone is rectangular; no seven pillars.

Literature: Helytovych 2010, pp. 35–6, no. 76 (with further bibliography and illustration); Dymytrii (Iarema) 2005, 404–10; Svientsitskyi-Sviatyts'kyi 1929, plate 15.

Cat. 26. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom* with the *Elevation of Panagia* and the *Praise to the Mother of God*, Moscow; Fig. 12.7.

41×34 cm

Location: MMK no. Zh-2711.

Dating: second half of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: Polotsk type; no segment of heaven with *Hetoimasia*; four angels flank Christ above Sophia; the two Johns have sword and the orb of the sun in their hands; beside each of them, the moon is depicted.

Literature: Preobrazhenskii 2017, 260; Samoilova 2007, 204–5; *Sofia* 2000, 328–9; *Sophia* 1999, 356–7; Markina 1998; online catalogue of MMK: <https://collectiononline.kreml.ru/iss2/items?info=10191>.

Cat. 27. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from Vologda, St George Church.

100×76 cm

Location: VGMZ no. 10345.

Dating: last third of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: cathedral type; eight angels adore the *Hetoimasia* (four each side), two further angels flank the bust of Christ, whose aureole is separated from that of Sophia; the angels stretch out their hands towards Sophia in the gesture of supplication.

Inscription on John's scroll: Matthew 3:2, 3:10

Literature: Preobrazhenskii 2007.

Cat. 28. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon.

33×40 cm

Location: Museum of Russian Icons, Clinton, MA, no. R2011.80.

Dating: ca. 1580.

Iconography: liturgical type; the Mother of God and John have crown; the blessing Christ has no aureole; Sophia is blessing with her right hand.

Inscription on John's scroll: Matthew 3:2.

Literature: online catalogue of the Museum of Russian icons:

<https://gallery.collectorsystems.com/MoRI/3119/R2011.80>.

Cat. 29. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon from the Solovki Monastery, North Russia; Fig. 7.1.

66×49 cm

Location: GTG no. 28643.

Dating: end of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: apocalyptic type; blessing Christ is in golden robe, his aureole is onion-shaped; two angels fold up the segment of heaven; on the *Hetoimasia* the gospel is open to John 7:24; Sophia's right is empty; she has flying wings; no seven pillars.

Literature: Osokina 2019, 538, n. 5; *Sofia* 2000, 152–3; *Sophia* 1999, 184–5; Antonova and Mneva 1963, vol. II, 500, no. 1045.

Cat. 30. *Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*, icon.

31×25 cm

Location: Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC, Acc. no. 89.83.

Dating: end of the sixteenth century.

Iconography: apocalyptic type; the *Hetoimasia* is replaced by the image of the Ancient of the Days, surrounded by a red aureole; two angels fold up the segment of heaven, six further angels flank the shared almond-shaped aureole of Christ in golden vestments and Sophia; Sophia has flying wings; no seven pillars.

Literature: Deyneka 2007; online catalogue of the Ackland Museum:

https://collection.ackland.org/?action=details&object_link_id=89.83.

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